

# DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

THE OFFICIAL BIOGRAPHY

by

MALCOLM THOMSON

*with the collaboration of*

FRANCES, COUNTESS

LLOYD-GEORGE OF DWYFOR

C.B.E.

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## INTRODUCTION

by

FRANCES, COUNTESS LLOYD-GEORGE OF DWYFOR, C.B.E.

"There be of them, that have left a name  
behind them, to declare their praises."  
*Ecclesiasticus* xlv, 8.

IN a letter to a friend who had written a biography of him, my husband wrote:

"... Biographers are rather terrifying people. There are two kinds especially, which public men must desire to avoid—the excessively derogatory and the excessively laudatory. In fact, the only biographical notices about myself which I should like to be able to read, but for circumstances over which I shall have no control I shall be prevented from reading, are my obituary notices. For out of sheer decency the writers will be more or less bound on that occasion to preserve a slight bias in favour of the subject matter, and that to my mind is the most attractive kind of biography."

I think that the Biography which Mr. Malcolm Thomson has written of my husband will fill the qualification in the last sentence. I make no apology for having asked him to write my husband's Life. He can claim that he has an intimate knowledge of his subject, since he worked under the same roof for more than fifteen years, first in London in the compiling of various books dealing with schemes for Social Reform; and later, while the *Memoirs* were being written, at Churt. He had the rare privilege of talking with L.G. day in and day out, of hearing from his own lips stories of the varied incidents of his life, of studying his character at first-hand, of gaining L.G.'s confidence over the work with which he was entrusted. I have an instruction from L.G. that if anything happened to him before the *Memoirs* were completed they were to be finished by Malcolm Thomson and myself.

In view of all this, while I realize that there were many distinguished writers who might have undertaken this Biography, I do not consider that anyone would be better equipped than the author for this purpose.

In writing this Preface I have tried not to encroach upon the author's province. He has built up his own picture of a great personality. I am seeking to delineate mine. The frontispiece picture which I am endeavouring to paint will, I am aware, suffer from the usual short-

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comings and failings of many portraits, where the subject is necessarily depicted through the eyes and the mind of a single person. Painted by another, the rendering would assume different aspects, present different features, and an alteration of lights, but such a picture again would meet with criticism from those who would prefer a different presentation of the subject. Few portraits, even those by the most distinguished artists, meet with general accord, or are universally acclaimed as a perfect likeness.

We know too well, moreover, how easy it is, by leaving out essential characteristics and emphasizing others, to make a portrait into a caricature, either designedly or by accident. And there are occasions when the likeness has been so distorted that the subject would not recognize himself. The truth is that the image, with all its merits and defects is, as it were, "in the eye of the beholder".

But in painting this portrait I have the advantage of having known my subject for thirty-three years, from his prime to his decline and his old age. It was my privilege, indeed it was my occupation, to watch and to some extent to share in his activities, his achievements, his sorrows and his failures. From his lips I heard tales of his childhood and adolescence, his early triumphs, his titanic struggles. As far as I am able this picture will be a faithful one. If, however, it errs on the side of indulgence, I make no apologies. Some portraits are inevitably more favourable to their subject than others.

There are several preliminary sketches before my mind which help to build up the final picture. There is one of L.G. as a small boy, roaming the woods at Llanystumdwy alone, or with his only boyhood friend, Bob Jones. The Dwyfor—the tumbling mountain river which winds through the woods to the sea—was a bond between them which held the fellowship together throughout their very divergent lives, and when Dafydd died, the verses that Bob penned to his lost friend were of the river which sang him an everlasting lullaby, and of the clouds above which formed his blanket.

Llanystumdwy as a village contained all that a little boy's heart could desire—river, sea, fishing, woods, nut trees, and wild cherries. And yet L.G. always said that he would never want his childhood back again. He was *bored*. He would try to fill up his spare time with interests. He cultivated the little cottage garden, planting soft fruit trees and manuring them with seaweed, tending the asters which he always loved for their gay colours. Now and then he trudged, a very small child, into Criccieth to the house of a friend who took in the *Trysorfa'r Plant* (*Children's Treasury*). He was allowed to read it there, but not to take it away. Books were rare things then—hard to come by. Now and then, too, the imaginations of the village boys would be caught by the stirring events in France (the career of "Appollyon", as the boys called Napoleon III), by

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the fiery speeches of Gladstone, having their repercussions in the Caernarvonshire elections, where, being Wales, both young and old were passionately and individually concerned. But still he was bored, and not happy. His hatred of an unpaid bill to the end of his life was the subconscious result of boyhood memories of his mother's anxiety as to whether she could meet the bill for flour for their daily bread.

Sometimes, when in later life he sat in his spacious and beautiful library at Churt, I know that his mind went back to the long winter evenings in the little cottage at Llanystumdwy where he crouched, miserably cold, by a tiny and inadequate fire in the small parlour over his lessons—lessons which he hoped would ultimately release him from poverty and frustration, and prove a gateway to a measure, at any rate, of comfort and freedom. Fame was not yet in his mind. But one day, as he ran into the cottage from school, his uncle, then a young man, but shunning marriage because of his responsibilities to his sister and her family, greeted him, and, hand upon Dafydd's shoulder, looking down at the upturned face, murmured half to himself the scriptural phrase, "Beth fydd y bachgen yn hwn?" (What shall this child be?)

There is another outline before me of a pale and slight boy of sixteen, making his first visit to London for his solicitor's examination, sitting spellbound in the gallery at Covent Garden listening to the wonder of Mozart's music and the singing of Adelina Patti in *Don Giovanni*; but listening with even more interest and curiosity to the Debates in the House of Commons, and coming back to Llanystumdwy perhaps with his ideas of the future all revised.

Perhaps Richard Lloyd had a vision of what might lie ahead for this boy, and it was for this reason that he instructed him in the importance of the *habit* of work, never allowing him to leave a task half-completed or to throw a book aside half-read. Later on, when he became articled to a firm of solicitors in Portmadoc, one of his employers, a wise old man, urged him always to apply himself wholeheartedly to a job, whatever it was. "It may be only licking stamps at first, or taking letters to the post, or turning the duplicating press; but you will find yourself in this way learning the *habit* of work, and when it comes to the more important things, you will be ready for them."

With these wise counsels, L.G. acquired the habit of work which was invaluable to him in after life. He became incapable of half-doing a job of work. If anything, he did it too thoroughly, as everyone around him knew to their cost. Whether in Parliament, in his office, or on his farm, he put just that extra amount into his work that took him further than his fellows. He was infinitely industrious over his speeches, writing them in his own handwriting, and revising them many times. The hundreds of writing-pads and note-books in my possession, filled with writing in

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pencil (he hated using a pen) testify to his indefatigable care over his speeches, his articles, and his *Memoirs*. Genius is indeed an infinite capacity for taking pains. L.G. was a perpetual demonstration of it.

He read, and mastered, departmental papers and all the memoranda which were prepared for him, with the greatest scrutiny, and if there happened to be a flaw or an error he seemed to be instinctively guided towards it. No slipshod work would do for him; no carelessness could hope to pass undetected.

As a youth he was strangely solitary, his preoccupation being chiefly with his solicitor's examinations and his books. His path even then seems to have diverged from the normal trend of his fellows. Although L.G. afterwards said that the summit of his expectations was a comfortable solicitor's practice and perhaps, if he were lucky, a pony and trap to take him about instead of the long, long walks from one appointment to the other, I cannot but believe that the outer world must have called him from his early days—the world where boredom was banished and his wits could meet their equal.

The tale of his progress from obscurity to fame, from Llanystumdwy to London, is told in detail in this book—his political and oratorical successes, his colossal struggles to achieve his social programme, and to win the war. It is not my business to tell the details of this romance, only to give a picture of the man who was enacting it.

L.G. was of the race of rare beings whose eager vitality understands no obstacle, and who are able to communicate their strength and their courage to those around them. When he needed a memorandum from someone, and was told that the facts he wanted would take a week to produce, and when he replied, "I must have them in 48 hours," he got them in 48 hours. That was the secret of his success during the 1914-1918 war. He would not take "No" for an answer. To his nature everything was possible, not only to himself but to others (if they wished). The Munitions could *not* be produced within such a period of time: they were. The money would *not* be forthcoming: it was. In March 1918, when disaster stared the Allies in the face, it was impossible to bring the Americans over in time. They were there in time. A Minister of State during the last War, and who had worked with him in the First World War, said in 1942: "L.G. is the biggest man I have ever come up against. . . . He is the one Minister who, when advised by permanent officials that they could not do a certain thing, was insistent enough to say, 'Get someone who can!' Other Ministers would always stand by what their officials advised."

Only on one occasion did I see L.G. hesitate for a while. On 5th December, 1916, when he was asked by the King to take over the Premiership, we were sitting together in his room at the War Office. He had been to

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the Palace to accept the responsibility of forming a Government. He said, as if to himself, "I wonder whether I can do it." We know the answer now. I knew it then.

But such a nature must inevitably build up antagonisms for itself. His very strength involved a certain ruthlessness, which those who suffered from it did not easily forget. Men who failed to come up to the mark which he set for them were—had to be—swept on one side. There was no time for leniency, or for laggards. His tongue would become a lash, and he knew just where to wound. He could get between the chinks of the armour of any enemy, and, if necessary, even of a friend. His colleagues in the Cabinet of which he was the head came to dread his taut, bitter sentences when they crossed him in argument. He had no compunction in hurting, to quote Wellington, "what gentlemen call their feelings". Just after L.G. had left Office—after he had been turned from power by a self-seeking group of Tories, headed by Baldwin who did, as Arthur Balfour said at the time, "the sort of thing that gentlemen don't do"—my colleague, J. T. Davies, said to me, "What L.G. does not realize is that there is not a single man in his Cabinet whom he has not insulted at one time or another."

I remember the almost tearful letter of protest sent by Lord Curzon when, at a Cabinet meeting, L.G. had taken umbrage because the Archbishop of Canterbury had attended, as L.G. thought, unasked. Curzon explained that the Archbishop had come at his request, because the question of requisitioning the British Museum was going to be discussed, and the Archbishop was one of the Trustees. "I did not ask the manager of the Hotel Cecil to attend the Cabinet when we took over his building," L.G. retorted. On this occasion even Balfour was tempted to drop a note to L.G. saying, "I think you have really hurt poor George's (Curzon's) feelings."

Assuredly he was not meek. His instinct, if he was hit, was to hit back and to hit harder than the other fellow—not always caring what weapon he used. "That was not fair!" I remember saying to him after a savage hurt which he had inflicted. "I wound where I know I can hurt most," was his reply.

No, there was no meekness in his make-up. There was rather an insolence which separated him from other men—in spite of his charm and attraction; an insolence which endeared him to those who were not the object of it. But he never attacked for the sake of attacking. If persuasion would win the day, then all his persuasive arts were brought into play, and only in the last resort would the deadlier and more devastating weapons be brought up into the field. Often, however, if he were aware that another man was about to attack him, he himself would launch a surprise attack, but from an unexpected quarter, and on a totally irrelevant

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subject, sufficient, however, to disarm his would-be opponent and throw him off his balance. This was a characteristic and favourite method of conducting a negotiation or argument. People accustomed to discussions on orthodox lines were, to put it mildly, at a disadvantage.

To be in his company was an exhilaration. His vitality permeated everything, and life suddenly became more interesting, more exciting, more varied. He was the happy owner of a well of exuberance, the spring of which never seemed to dry up. To live with him was to become possessed, as it were, of an Aladdin's lamp, for nothing seemed impossible. One was not allowed to become depressed or dispirited. His wonderful buoyancy forbade it, and he lifted you along on the surface of hopefulness—or certainty—which he himself had created. The dulllest pastimes became full of interest. His gaiety was of the essence of his nature. Life was lifted to another plane. Every walk was an adventure. He never took the straight road, and always insisted upon returning by a different way.

At home, he wanted everyone to be happy around him, and would take infinite trouble with his guests. He was specially attentive to the diffident and those of lesser account, often going out of his way to give them confidence and pleasure. He was utterly charming with children, devising all kinds of original means of entertaining them, to his pleasure no less than theirs—means, however, which sometimes proved over-exciting and of which anxious parents often disapproved.

I should say that his influence in the household, as far as the children were concerned, was slightly subversive. It was summed up, I think, in the words of a small child who had complained of the strictness of her Nannie. "Do you think I am strict?" L.G. asked her. "Well, Taid," was the frank reply, "sometimes you're too strict, and sometimes you're not strict enough."

He was, to be perfectly frank, not an easy person to live with. What genius is? There were some, who preferred an easy life or had only a moderate amount of vitality, who were debilitated, even exhausted, by his presence.

The fact was that whenever L.G. entered a household, that household ceased to function normally. He became its magnetic pole. It was not that he asked for such attention. He did not even expect it. He just took it entirely for granted. He was proud of the phrase "My wants are very simple"—though it often took an extremely complex system of organization to supply them! But the place, when he had gone, was—and is—empty indeed.

I think it must always have been so, even in his very early days. He was very helpless about personal matters, could never, for instance, even as a child, find his own socks. There was, I believe, a daily refrain, "Mother, where are my socks?" Even in that straitened household he seems to

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have been waited on by his mother, by his uncle, and even by his brother and sister, so that as he grew up he simply took it for granted that he would be cared for, looked after, and, inevitably, there was always someone who would be only too glad to do this for him. And wherever he was, whether in the house, on the platform, in Parliament, in the Conference Room, or at a dinner-party, he was inevitably the focal point of interest. It was not deliberate on his part: it was simply that he was born a ruler. In things great or small, a political campaign or a picnic-party, he always held the initiative. Without a doubt he was unreasonable—utterly and consistently and essentially unreasonable. But he did not take without giving. He reciprocated with a warm understanding and sympathy, an irrepressible wit and gaiety, which at times verged upon ribaldry, was always Celtic, and would often shock the more prudish.

Sometimes his moods would be of a boisterous tempo. Often on a long car ride, to while away the time, he would start an orgy of singing—comic songs, arias, Welsh hymns, old folk tunes, in which his companions were invited to join or compete. On these occasions he would sometimes break into the Negro spiritual, "Nobody knows the trouble I've seen"—but substituting "been" for "seen". Sometimes, at home, becoming more than usually exhilarated, he would seize the person next to him and whirl around in a ridiculous dance (though agile on his feet, L.G. had never learned to dance properly). Or, in the middle of preparing and rehearsing a speech, he would get bored, and deliver it in the broadest of Welsh accents to an imaginary audience, with all the appropriate interruptions and retorts.

But in spite of the fact that he came like a whirlwind into the house, incalculable and erratic and disturbing, as father and husband he was kind, gay and indulgent, thoughtful for the welfare of his children, anxious to the point of frenzy when they were ill or in danger. He could be exacting to an exasperating degree, but he could show a tenderness beyond most men, and to the end of his life he could not speak of his dead daughter without weeping.

His sense of fun sometimes led him to danger point, for the line between the solemn and the ridiculous was for him very finely drawn, and his comments at the gravest moments were often such as to be quite unpublishable. He had very little real sense of reverence, except for matters relating to Wales and to his fellow countrymen, and he hotly resented any jokes made at their expense. Those who knew him wisely kept off this sacred ground. He held that ridicule was the surest weapon with which to slay an enemy. He perhaps sometimes forgot that it was a certain method of making an enemy.

His friendships throughout his life were few. After he entered Welsh politics he took pleasure in the company of men like Tom Ellis,

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Llewelyn Williams, and Vincent Evans. Later, when his political life became more sophisticated, his political friends were more sophisticated too—Alec Murray, Rufus Isaacs, Charles Masterman, George Riddell. But always his associates were good colleagues and good companions rather than close friends. The most real friendship from the time he entered Office was that between himself and Winston Churchill. But the divergence of their outlook was a barrier to complete understanding, though each admired the other's genius to the end, and they always delighted in each other's company. When they fell out in politics they did not hesitate to express their feelings, but underneath the friendship stood firm. They had little personal differences, too. Both were fond of talking, and sometimes there was competition. On one occasion, L.G., having failed to get a word in edgeways, said testily, "Winston, I'd like to remind you that conversation is not a monologue." The sequel of the story justifies the telling. Churchill took the rebuke mildly, but L.G., realizing afterwards that he had been rude, wrote a note of apology to Churchill. The reply of the latter, in turn, was characteristically magnanimous, "It was I that was churlish," he wrote. Lawrence of Arabia once wrote that Churchill with L.G. was a completely different person from Churchill with anyone else—that L.G. completely dominated him.

When the Cabinet sat in tense conclave during the week preceding the Declaration of War on 4th August, 1914, and it looked at first as though L.G. might join the section of Liberal Ministers who were opposed to our entry into the war, urgent notes passed between the two friends. Churchill wrote, fearing to lose not only L.G.'s friendship but his splendid fighting quality:

"All the rest of our lives we shall be opposed. I am deeply attached to you and have followed your instinct and guidance for nearly ten years."

L.G. replied, knowing in his heart of hearts that he would not be able to keep out of the war, that he would not resign:

"If patience prevails and you do not press us too hard tonight, we might come together."

And Churchill's reply was:

"Please God—it is our whole future—comrades—or opponents. The march of events will be dominating."

Nevertheless, L.G. was often mistrustful of Churchill's judgment. "Winston often loses great opportunities because he is too self-centred," he was wont to say, and would quote a couplet which he learnt in his youth:

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When self the wavering balance shakes  
'Tis rarely right adjusted.

L.G. did, in fact, enjoy the company of men. He would always prefer a men's party to a mixed one, and many of his most pleasurable holidays were spent in the company of men alone.

But he did also take pleasure in the company of women. As with many men of genius, the friendship of women was a necessity to him, and he could persuade each one of them, even the most intelligent, that she alone really understood him. He compelled unreasoning and passionate adoration. He charmed and was irresistible. His voice alone was a seduction.

The plain fact was, however, that he had not much time for friendship. Friendship demands leisure in which to fructify. L.G. had very little of that from the time he decided to enter Parliament—and less and less of it as time went on.

It was not easy for the majority, even of his friends, to call L.G. by his Christian name. In spite of his charm and easiness of approach, and his reckless gaiety, he did not encourage familiarity—indeed he resented it. It was a foolish man who thought he could take liberties with L.G. The "jolly fellow" who thought that he could slap him on the back was soon aware of his mistake and retired in discomfiture. Men—and women—who were under the impression that they had penetrated the inner recesses of L.G.'s friendship discovered, to their ultimate astonishment and chagrin, that they had not conquered even the outer bastion of his affections. There was an aloof and withdrawn quality, an essential secretiveness, which forbade access to any abiding intimacy.

But again in his relations with Churchill there was a difference. It was "Winston" and "David" almost from the first. I think Mr. Churchill was the only one of L.G.'s friends who called him "David". From the earliest political days these two were strangely and prophetically drawn together. Each divined in the other the quality of genius which separated them from the ordinary run of men, and drew them together—the village boy and the Duke's grandson. Class distinctions meant nothing to either of them. L.G. did not much care for Churchill's aristocratic friends, but then, I fancy, Churchill sometimes did not much care for them himself.

The class from which Churchill had sprung was alien to L.G., and to the end of his life he was ill at ease and uncomfortable in the houses of the great. He shrank from their gatherings and their dinner-parties, avoiding them whenever possible. He was on one occasion persuaded by Churchill to accept an invitation to Blenheim, but the then Duke offered him a taunt which confirmed him in his resolve not to frequent such places. To the end he had a horror of Society, and shunned the

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attentions of Mayfair hostesses. I remember putting a letter on his desk containing an invitation from a very important, but very importunate, London hostess, and finding it afterwards with the words "No! No! No!" scrawled large over it in red pencil. Chequers, with all its ancient beauty and perfect accoutrement, did not appeal to him. "It is full of the ghosts of dull people," he said. Briand, who visited him there, agreed with him, but on other grounds. "*C'est trop authentique*", was his comment.

Similarly, he disliked Court functions. King George V, after L.G. (as Prime Minister) had avoided several invitations, including one to Windsor, mildly rebuked him for what he considered to be bordering on a discourtesy.

L.G. held the view that Asquith had made a mistake in forsaking his natural *milieu* and nonconformity, and becoming entangled in the net of London Society, fascinating and entertaining as it might be. He held that late nights and glamorous parties dissipated a man's energies and impaired his capacity for work. Never at any moment was L.G.'s mind divorced from his work. Even on the golf course, where the foursome would invariably consist of colleagues from his working entourage, the conversation was almost invariably "shop", and the game was often interrupted and literally brought to a standstill (to the annoyance of the players following on) by a political argument taking place in the middle of the fairway. On his holidays (which were always cut short because he became bored with them) he saw to it that he had companions who could discuss current schemes, and he was never out of touch with Westminster or Whitehall, with his ear—or someone else's—to the ground. This preoccupation with affairs gave him an advantage over men who considered that they had social obligations, or even family calls, for he was invariably one move ahead—at least in the political game.

I remember his being very angry because Gwilym, his son, left his constituency in the middle of an election to go to his wife, who was lying ill after the birth of her first child. "He ought not to leave his job; he doesn't deserve to get in," L.G. said ruthlessly.

There was indeed a hard core to his nature. How else, indeed, could he have withstood and foiled the enemies that beset his path, in peace and in war? His code was that the job was the thing. It came first, and personal considerations afterwards. He would tell of an old engraving which had stuck in his mind since his youth—a picture of a soldier with his bride on his arm, but turning away from her as the sound of the bugle called him to arms. "That represents what any man should do, when the conflict arises."

One had to be on one's toes when serving him. More than once, when he was Prime Minister and a Cabinet Meeting was in progress, my

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bell would ring, and he would say to me, "Bring me that paper." I had to do some quick and quiet thinking, not daring to ask for more particulars before that formidable assembly, but putting two and two together, and guessing at the stage which the discussions had reached, in order to arrive at what was in the mind of the Prime Minister.

He disliked all rules and regulations—no barriers were insuperable to him. He hated the high walls which people build around their homes and estates to shut them off from the common people. Even fences annoyed him. "I hate fences!" he exclaimed, when it became necessary to erect a fence around his garden at Churt. However, when his orchards grew to maturity, and he realized that the instincts of small boys in relation to ripe fruit remained exactly what they had been in his own childhood, he became more reconciled to those barriers! But the entrance to Bron-y-de remained, on his instructions, gateless to the end.

He was, of course, an iconoclast, but he only tore down in order to build better. He admired Gladstone, but did not love him. "Gladstone did not really care about the condition of the poor," L.G. would declare; "large issues like Home Rule and the misdeeds of the Turk, yes; but how the poor lived, and what were the injustices from which they suffered, these things did not appeal to him." On the other hand, Joseph Chamberlain did, according to L.G., who often asserted that they could have worked together, for the reason that they had much in common.

But his admiration of Gladstone as a parliamentarian was unstinted. "He was terrific," L.G. used to say, "grand to a terrifying degree, even at 80 years of age." L.G. strongly resented the suggestion in the play written about Parnell that Gladstone acted from mean motives in his actions towards Parnell. "It was Morley who suggested to Gladstone that he would not be able to carry the Nonconformist vote on Home Rule if Parnell remained as leader of the Irish Party." L.G. would also describe the scene which he witnessed when Parnell entered the House of Commons after his disgrace. Parnell, erect and defiant, walked in amidst a dead silence, everyone shunning him. Only Jacob Bright, the Quaker, stainless of character and greatly respected, got up from his seat behind the Government benches and went over and sat down by Parnell, shook hands with him and chatted with him.

Later L.G. asked Parnell if he could introduce to him a Welsh friend who was in the Gallery. "Ah," said Parnell, "I did not know that I had any friends left in Wales." The Welsh Liberals all took the side of Gladstone in the controversy.

To my mind, it was the *alert* quality of L.G.'s brain that made him a leader of men; and not only a leader, but a driver. Like the expert chess player, he would see and plan many moves ahead—always aware of what his opponent would do under certain circumstances, knowing his

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reactions before even the man himself was aware of them; reaching the ultimate goal by a set series of moves, often in the zigzag fashion of a chessboard. When he opened his play, his first move gave no indication of what he was really after—one had to look several moves ahead for that.

This knowledge of human nature, this awareness of the other fellow's reaction, is, I think, a peculiarly Welsh quality of mind, and is allied with the Celtic vision and imagination which L.G. possessed to an extraordinary degree. Add to this his exceptional power of language, and you have a combination of qualities which made him unbeatable in conference or in debate—and, what is more important, enabled him always to get his own way. When you add to this a vitality of almost super-human dimensions, his supremacy is fully explained.

A clever physician and diagnostician once said to me, "The trouble about L.G." (the word "trouble" was his) "is that he has exactly double the amount of vitality that any man ought to have."

His memory, as in the case of many great men, was prodigious. Often in conversation he could score on a point of accuracy against men for whom the question under discussion was their special subject. Once when talking with three eminent Nonconformists he described his uncle returning home from a preaching meeting and saying that he had listened to a sermon on the text, ". . . and I will not meet thee as a man." All three, being preachers, were interested, but expressed polite incredulity as to the existence of such a text. L.G., however, stood his ground, and the text was finally discovered in *Isaiah* xlvii, 3.

In July 1934 L.G. was entertained by the Press Gallery of the House of Commons to luncheon, and in the course of conversation expressed his regret that he had never heard Disraeli speak. He remembered, he said, a speech on India in which the famous phrase occurred, "The key to India is not Herat; it is London." Sir Alexander Mackintosh, the doyen of the Press Gallery, corrected him, saying, "I *heard* that speech, but that is not what Disraeli said. He said, 'The key to India is Constantinople.'" L.G., however, insisted that he was right, and the following day a letter came from Mackintosh: "You were right about the key to India phrase in Disraeli's speech. Dizzy said, 'The key to India is not Herat, or Kandahar, the key to India is London.'"

Yet he could never remember his wife's birthday, or those of any of his children, and he invariably made a muddle over double-barrelled names!

There were those who were exasperated by his change of mood, by his inconsistencies, by his incalculability. But in dealing with him one took the fat with the lean, the kicks with the bouquets, the periods of understanding and gentleness and charm with the periods of lightning

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angers and wilful annoyances and consistent unreasonableness. In the experience of most, however, the good periods more than compensated for the bad, though sometimes one was particularly hard put to it not to lose one's patience. I remember one day just after the end of the war, when General Botha was expected to arrive in London for the Peace Conference. L.G. was taking his afternoon's rest after a gruelling morning and I knew he was dead beat and needed all his energy for a Conference later in the day. The message came that Botha was arriving at Victoria station at 3.30. Should I wake L.G. in order that he could go and meet Botha, or should I let him sleep? I learnt that adequate arrangements had been made to meet Botha, and I decided on the latter course. When L.G. awoke I told him of Botha's arrival, and his wrath was unloosed upon me. Could I not have understood the importance of L.G. being there in person to greet this distinguished visitor? It was a blunder of the first order, one which could never, never be repaired. I was reduced literally to tears, feeling that I had misguidedly, though unintentionally, yet nevertheless quite irretrievably, lost a part, if not the whole, of the British Empire to this country. Very shortly afterwards a message came through to say that Botha's train had been delayed and that he would not be at Victoria for another half hour. Overjoyed, I rushed to tell L.G. the happy news, in order that, after all, he could be on the station platform as he wished. "Send Philip Kerr to meet him," was the reply I received.

When he was angry and upset, he was inclined to distribute his displeasure amongst those who happened to be near. But if the atmosphere was sometimes disturbed by freak storms, one knew that they would not last long, and that the brilliance of the ensuing weather would more than compensate for the clouded interval.

One might at some times have become completely overwhelmed and discouraged by these unreasonable moods—by this piece of quicksilver that was so often set to stormy weather—had not one known that his passionate devotion to the service of the people and humanity stood firm and unalterable as a rock, which the opposing waves could beat upon and perhaps temporarily obscure, but never move or break; and that the light of the love of freedom and truth shone ever strong and steadily in his mind and heart, even though, like the flame in a light-house, it appeared to be at times obscured. The things he cared for were deep and unchanging, and the vicissitudes of political life and the change in his own circumstances from poverty to comparative wealth did not affect them. To some of his critics he appeared to alter, but at heart he never changed. "I don't alter," he said to me often. "I may appear to change, but I don't." It was true. His love, once given, never altered. Once he gave his heart to a cause, he never failed it. Few people realized this, but it was the secret of his permanent greatness. It was this which

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enabled him, during the seventeen years he was in Office, to put into motion the social revolution which is even now being completed.

Good men like C. P. Scott, Dr. John Clifford, and others, men of untarnishable rectitude, who knew his frailties and his weaknesses, understood him and loved him, because they were aware of his essential largeness.

But during his Premiership there were those who resented being pulled along at L.G.'s pace. They were afraid of the progressive measures that were being enacted under his Premiership—woman suffrage, advanced education ("Don't educate the working classes": I have myself heard this from the lips of the deeper-dyed Tories), and then the one unforgivable sin, Home Rule for Ireland. That measure, I think, spelt the end of L.G.'s dominion. What irony to think that the very Party that had opposed it later agreed to giving away the very safeguard which L.G. retained!

After the Peace Conference he continued to fight the French tooth and nail over their schemes for bleeding Germany, and for occupying the Ruhr—as they eventually did, making the path clear for Hitler. Interallied Conferences were stormy and indecisive. Once, after an impasse had been reached, the whole French Delegation packed up early in the morning and left London in the middle of a Conference, and I found a note on my desk on arriving at 10 Downing Street:

*"Les conférences interalliées ne sont pas les champs de bataille les moins dangereux."*

*"Aristide Briand."*

During these years L.G. doubtless recollected the advice given to him many years before by Joseph Chamberlain which he had repeated to me many times: "Whatever you are tempted to do in politics, be sure you have the Party machine behind you." L.G. had renounced the Party machine in 1916. He renounced it again when, after the war, it was suggested that he should virtually join the Tories. (Churchill, much later, was aware of L.G.'s mistake, and did not repeat it.) The mumblings and grumblings in the Tory Party increased. Although L.G. had many stalwart and loyal friends amongst the Conservatives—Balfour, Austen Chamberlain, Birkenhead, and others—there were lesser men who wanted to return to party Government, where the offices and the plums would all go to Conservatives and not have to be shared with the Liberals.

When the end of his administration came in October 1922, I think L.G. was glad. On the morning of 19th October it transpired that a vote was to be taken at a Party meeting at the Carlton Club for or against continuation of the Coalition. I sat with L.G. in the Cabinet Room

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awaiting the result. He was very quiet, and I tried to talk to him about anything but the thing we were both thinking of. Then a telephone message came to say that the vote had gone against L.G. and almost immediately Austen Chamberlain burst into the room. "We are beaten: we must resign!" he exclaimed, extremely agitated. I slipped out of the room and left them to compose L.G.'s letter of resignation to the King.

L.G. naturally resented the methods by which his resignation was secured, especially in view of his offer the previous year to resign and leave the field to the Conservatives, but, strangely enough, he bore no malice in after years against the architect of his downfall.

In politics there is no gentle passing of the seasons; you go from high summer to bleakest winter. It takes a strong heart to weather it. L.G., from wielding immense power at home and abroad, passed into the wilderness where, although fortunately he did not know it, he was to remain for the rest of his life. Some prophesied that he would be back in Office in six months—some said two years. He shook his head and said, "The Tories will be in Office now for twenty years." How very near the mark he was! Did he, with his prophetic instinct, also fear that by the end of that time the nation would have been dragged, step by unheeding step, into another war, more terrible even than the last?

I do not wish to remember the dreary time that followed—the long stream of scarcely courteous notes from the disloyal Tory Ministers—the quick evacuation from Downing Street—the losing fight at the election, L.G. sitting distrait in an uncomfortable chair in a furnished house while another home was being prepared for him.

There was a journey to America in 1923, where he was royally received, which acted as a tonic to his somewhat depressed spirits.

It was a strange irony of fate that made Bonar Law L.G.'s successor to power. He had been a stalwart colleague and companion. His gentle, rather sad disposition was the complete antithesis to L.G.'s vitality, and Bonar Law's practical cautiousness often acted as a brake on L.G.'s mercurial daring. It was a very happy and satisfactory partnership, each man holding the other in esteem and admiration which bordered on affection. Bonar Law had resigned in 1921 on grounds of ill-health—he was, indeed, a sick man. I have a letter which he wrote to me on 19th March, 1921, in which he says: "I hope you have forgiven me for adding to the burdens of your Chief, and although as you know from our conversations in Paris<sup>1</sup> that I was very weary of it, you must not think that I expected this. Until Wednesday morning I had no more idea of resigning than I have had at any time for at least three years." What, then, or who, was responsible for this *volte-face* eighteen months after, when Bonar Law's malady had an increasing hold upon him? There are some who probably

<sup>1</sup>During a recent Conference.

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know the answer to this question. L.G., with his penetrating knowledge of the minds and motives of men, had a shrewd suspicion.

In the years that followed abortive attempts were made to close the breach in the Liberal Party, promoted by well-wishers to both sides, and to Liberalism itself. There were visits to Asquith, a pot of honey taken to Lady Oxford. (There were caustic comments incompatible with the sweetness of the honey-pot on the part both of the giver and the recipient!) But then came the General Strike, and the full bitterness of the Asquithians was loosed upon L.G. Their hatred for him was unmasked now that they thought the opportunity had come to ruin him once and for all. He was formally and publicly disowned and disinherited for the line he took, and after that no more attempts were, or could be, made for reunion.

L.G. once said that he attributed the downfall of the Liberal Party to an oyster. The story was in this wise. Percy Illingworth, the brilliant Whip of the Liberal Party, died early in 1915 as the result of typhoid after eating a bad oyster. L.G.'s theory was that had he lived, he would never have allowed the rift between Asquith and L.G., which became a split in 1916, to develop. He would have intervened, held up to the light the intrigues of certain of L.G.'s colleagues who were anxious to get rid of him, and whom Illingworth knew well. When Illingworth died his successors were mediocre and narrow men, who put persons and personalities before the welfare of the Party. Gulland, the Chief Whip in 1916, did nothing to try to heal the breach. Long after, L.G. told Asquith that Gulland never approached him at that time to see if anything could be done. "You may not believe me," replied Asquith, "but he never came near me either."

It was clear that the Asquithians, even if they had forgiven L.G.'s success as P.M., could never forgive the 1918 election. When the amazing results of the election began to come in, L.G. was upset and uneasy. When someone burst into the room excitedly to announce that Asquith and some of his colleagues had lost their seats, L.G. shook his head and said, "I did not want this." With his acute political intuition he knew that such a large majority was an unhealthy one; it made a mock of the Parliamentary system; it savoured too much of a dictatorship, and with his capacity for looking ahead L.G. could foresee the calamities which dictatorship breeds.

In the early summer of 1931, when financial clouds were lowering, Ramsay MacDonald, realizing himself to be too weak to withstand not only Tory pressure, but even his own colleagues, sought out L.G., and together they discussed a Coalition of which Ramsay would be the head and L.G. the second in command. L.G. never liked Ramsay, never trusted him, and his diagnosis of Ramsay's character was justified

by the subsequent events. Early in August L.G. was taken ill, and was obliged to undergo a serious operation which would certainly incapacitate him for some months. Before he was well enough to leave his room, and while he was still unable to discuss any business, Ramsay had formed a coalition with the Liberals and Tories, very soon committing them to an election on terms to which L.G. would never have agreed. He was helpless, strong enough only to denounce Samuel and Sinclair and Reading and the others who had allowed themselves to be inveigled into such a combination. The disaster which L.G. foresaw soon followed. Some of the Liberals quickly disentangled themselves, but the mischief had been done.

From then onwards there were fruitless bitter years for L.G. When he had left Office, at the end of 1922, the name of Britain stood as high in Europe and in the world as it ever had or could. In the seventeen years that followed before the outbreak of the Second World War her influence gradually became less and less, her power diminished, her prestige dimmed, her glory tarnished.

Some have said he was a frustrated old man. In that case, it was not a frustration of self, but the bitter knowledge that had he been given the opportunity he might have been able to save his country, and indeed Europe herself, from the abomination of desolation which he instinctively knew would result from another war. "It need never have happened."

By his very nature, nevertheless, he could not be idle, and around the house he had built for himself he began work on his famous farm, proving that first-class apples could be produced even on poor soil, winning prizes for his blackcurrants. Like everything else he did, it must be first-rate, and no trouble was too much to ensure this. Experts were consulted—and sometimes overridden—novel and unorthodox methods employed, and another service done for his country, in the realm this time of food production.

In the summer of 1932 I had been wondering what task or occupation could be found to divert L.G. when Philip Guedalla and his wife came to stay at Churt for the week-end. Philip had brought me the MS. of his new book, which he asked me to read through. I gave a good deal of time to it during the week-end, and after our guests' departure L.G. took me to task, rather jealous that I should have neglected other matters for Philip's MS. "Well," I replied, "if you will write your book, I will read *your* manuscript." The next morning he presented me with the first thousand words of what were to be the six volumes of his *War Memoirs*. The work went on apace after that, and the chapters increased steadily. He could never do anything except with the whole of his energy, and we were hard put to it to keep pace with his output. The first two volumes

were published in September 1933. The others appeared in following years.

In some of the pages he let loose his wrath and bitterness against those who had been unable to prevent unnecessary slaughter. Some of his friends regretted his bitter sentences—were shocked at his onslaughts on personalities—begged him to delete the offending passages. But he refused to do so. Who knows but that his terrible words made an impression upon those in authority during the last war, so that they were forced to devise other means of waging warfare—means which were scorned during the 1914–1918 war? Churchill wrote to him towards the end of the war, “I learned a great deal from you and am grateful to you for your great kindness and friendship.”

He was too human, too vital, too pugnacious, to suffer gladly—or to suffer at all—the fools who ruled England during those hurrying years before the last war—self-satisfied, unimaginative, obstinate, procrastinating men—well-meaning men, perhaps, but with all the lack of achievement which that devastating phrase implies: rulers who had sufficient prestige and determination to depose a king, but had not the sagacity to ensure that the country was sufficiently well prepared against the perilous crisis which loomed so vividly ahead.

In the intervals L.G. warned Parliament and the nation from time to time of what was happening, and of what would happen. How many times did I watch him from the Gallery delivering those passionate, almost terrible, warnings: and I would turn to the complacent, often derisive faces on the Treasury Bench opposite him, and on other benches, too, and the image of Cassandra, with her never-to-be-believed prophecies, came too readily to my mind.

Had he been allowed to bring his unusual faculties to bear on—or in—the Governments of the thirties, I fully believe that events would have taken a different turn. We should not have given way first to Japan, then to Italy. Spanish Liberals would not have been utterly betrayed; the promise to the Jews regarding Palestine would not have been whittled down by weak and incompetent men until an impossible situation had been created, and “a base betrayal”, as Churchill named it, would not have been perpetrated. L.G. might have compromised—he was, indeed, a master of compromise—he would never have appeased. There would have been no Munich; but there might have been no war. Given the authority, L.G. instinctively felt that he could have dealt with Hitler, and the latter, in his turn, was aware of L.G.’s quality and power. In the last event, L.G. would have delayed Hitler’s aggressive operations for a sufficiently long time to enable other nations to organize a powerful *cordon sanitaire* around Germany. Above all, he would have had a definite arrangement with Russia. And knowing all this, what of the bitterness

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in L.G.'s heart? The galling knowledge that if they would listen to him he could deal with the situation, could avert the doom which, unheeded, he could see threatening not only this nation, but the world!

L.G. often quoted a remark made to him by a well-wisher, "My boy, whatever happens to you, never allow yourself to become bitter." He quoted it less often during those years.

The 1935 election came and L.G. was dispirited at the prospect. "I feel like the Abyssinians must be feeling," he said, "knowing that all the guns and ammunition are with the other side—and all the poison gas, too."

And on the occasions when he reiterated his warning that, at any rate, we should become self-supporting as far as food supplies were concerned, the Tories—and many Liberals—were frankly bored, and the numbers on the benches would dwindle.

Late in the thirties he struggled to bring his Council of Action into being as a live organization "for Peace and Reconstruction", but it failed to make any appreciable impression upon a Government policy already heading for disaster. Some of the Free Church Leaders upon whom L.G. had relied, and who had given their promise to support it, backed out of the movement. There was a stormy scene. "Gideon knew how to distinguish between the funks and the brave men," L.G. said angrily to them when they came to announce their change of front. "I wish someone would give me that power." "He had only 300 left at the finish," one of the visitors reminded him. "But Gideon won," retorted L.G. Alas, L.G. did not.

Within the pages of this book the history of these unheeded warnings will be told in greater detail. L.G. was not alone in his crusade. Churchill also saw the danger ahead. In his speech in the United States in March 1946, he said:

"Up till the year 1933, or even 1935, Germany might have been saved from the awful fate which has overtaken her, and we might all have been spared the miseries Hitler let loose upon mankind. There never was a war in all history easier to prevent by timely action than the one which has just desolated such great areas of the globe. It could have been prevented without the firing of a single shot, and Germany might be powerful, prosperous and honoured today; but no one would listen and one by one we were all sucked into the awful whirlpool. . . ."

When Neville Chamberlain made his speech on his return from Munich, and M.P.s acclaimed him as a saviour, L.G. kept his seat

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and made no sound. With characteristic prescience he was farther ahead than the cheering and waving crowd in the House. He realized that not by such means, *non tali auxilio*, could peace and safety be procured. He understood the sacrifice of prestige involved in the humiliating journey to Munich which, far from frightening the Fuehrer, would only encourage him, and he sensed the underlying meaning of this modern version of the Sibylline books, by which Britain was left with less and less bargaining power.

The outbreak of war shocked and rent him. In the following pages the story is told of the efforts that were made to bring him into the Government in some position of authority, and of his reasons for declining. When Lord Lothian died in 1940, and L.G. was offered the post of Ambassador to the United States, he felt that he would not be able to fulfil the demands upon him in such a capacity. But his aversion to taking any active part in the war had a more personal aspect as far as Churchill was concerned. L.G. was convinced that his and Churchill's attitude to the conduct of the war would be so divergent as to make continual co-operation impossible. "I don't want to quarrel with Winston," he said repeatedly, "I am fond of him."

And then the shadows began to fall. It had been a long road from Llanystumdwy to London—to the seat of Government, to the first seat in the conclave of Empire. He had travelled well and truly and unafraid. He had borne the heat of the day and heavy burdens with courage—with eagerness even. ("Am I no a bonnie fighter, Davy?" was one of his favourite quotations—and he always laid down that if a man *was* a "bonnie fighter", like Alan Breck, it was not vanity or boastfulness for him to say so.) But now he was tired, and the road back to Llanystumdwy was easy and wholly natural, and very desirable. And so one lovely September evening we came over the glorious Welsh hills down to the blue of the Cambrian sea. Along the coast to the little village and the old bridge he drove, and so he came home again.

He had begun to lose interest in the war. On one of his last visits to the House of Commons, he said to Churchill when they met in the corridor, "This war has gone on too long." L.G. was totally opposed to the policy of unconditional surrender, and when the policy of a punitive peace had been finally decided upon he was angered and horrified, and I think he gave up hope. Part of his genius lay in the fact that he was at all times able to see so much farther ahead than any other living statesman. He said, as he had done in 1918, when Foch wanted to pursue the Germans to the Rhine, "You must have someone to make peace with." He knew sufficiently well the character of the Germans, and especially of the Germans, trained and commanded by a fanatic like Hitler, to realize that they would utterly destroy themselves rather than surrender uncondition-

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ally. He was entirely sympathetic to Russia at that time (his speeches and actions throughout point to this), but as a British statesman he saw the un wisdom of allowing ourselves to be drawn up point-blank against Russia in the settlement of Europe. I think he would have avoided the mistake of allowing Russia to become the dominant power in Europe, just as sagacious statesmen did after the Napoleonic wars. And in saying this I am not talking of something that came to mind after the event. L.G. saw the results far ahead, and feared for the chaos which he foresaw would ensue on "unconditional surrender". But as his strength began to fail him, he wisely put aside such preoccupations and cares. By now he had achieved a serenity which was foreign to him in his fighting days. It contented him that he lay in his beloved village, encircled by mountain, river and sea.

His weakness increased, but his patience and serenity with it. He seemed even more lovable in his helplessness than he was in his strength.

In previous weeks, during the early stages of his illness, he had concentrated on reading Macaulay—the *History of England*, and the *Essays*—from cover to cover. Now his beloved Dickens was once more pressed into service—*Martin Chuzzlewit*, *Nicholas Nickleby* and the *Pickwick Papers*. But at last the process of reading became oh, so slow, and finally it was abandoned altogether.

His children, his grandchildren, his brother, and many friends paid him frequent visits and sat with him in the lovely window which he himself had had built to take in the broad view of sea, sky and mountain. "Who is coming today?" he would ask me in the morning. And he would enjoy the visit, albeit he became quickly tired.

At other times he would sit silent, deep in thought, and dozing from time to time. Not once during the whole of that time did he give any sign that he was conscious of his increasing weakness, or that he was nearing the end.

I remembered then how one day soon after Ramsay MacDonald's sudden death, L.G. said he thought it was an ideal way of passing and that he would himself prefer such a death. "I would like to be called quite unexpectedly and without warning," he said, "just as when the other evening at Buckingham Palace someone touched me on the shoulder, and said, 'The King wants you.'" L.G. did not pass like that, but his end was none the less gentle. It seemed like a quiet translation from this world to the next.

One afternoon, when I thought he was asleep, he opened his eyes and turned to me, and said, "Play 'Who will lead me to the strong City'." The last verse of this hymn begins: "Christ will lead me to the strong City". It was one of the Welsh hymns which I had played to him

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on so many occasions during the years, especially at times of stress and trial.

And then, on a cloudless and windless March day, we watched by his bedside for the end. He had become oblivious of us and of this world, and in the evening, after the sun had set, quietly, happily, he answered his last great "Who goes Home?"

## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THE career of David Lloyd George has already been the theme of very many biographies, memoirs and diaries—some friendly, some critical, a few hostile. No doubt his story will often be told and retold in the years to come; for it is not only a dramatic tale of personal struggle and success by a man of exceptional genius, but a vitally important chapter of national and world history. He rose from his humble origin in a remote Welsh village to become the outstanding figure of his generation, dominating the political and social developments of Britain during an era of revolutionary transition, exerting a decisive influence on the course of the First World War, and shaping the new Europe which emerged from the peace settlement. The marks of his creative statesmanship are thick upon every department of our national life, and imprinted across the map of the world.

It is a crowded story; for David Lloyd George lived eighty-two years, mostly at a pace and with an energy twice or thrice that of an ordinary man. To compress that tale within the compass of a single volume I have had to concentrate on the events of chief importance, setting aside much which it would have been interesting to include and omitting even the mention of not a few of the people associated with his career. I hope that it may be possible at a later date to repair some of these omissions by the publication of further material from his papers and correspondence, and by an amplification of this Volume.

A biographer of Lloyd George is liable to suffer more from excess than from lack of material. Most of the great statesman's life was passed under the limelight of Press publicity, for everything he said or did was news, and was eagerly reported in the papers. The columns of *Hansard* preserve his parliamentary speeches. Biographers have searched out even the smallest crumbs of information about his beginnings and early life. He himself placed on record his own account of the part he played in world affairs during his years of supreme achievement and responsibility in the six bulky volumes of his *War Memoirs*, and the two entitled *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*. Many among his friends and acquaintances noted his doings and sayings in diaries which they have subsequently published.

In addition, Lloyd George's collected papers, including official documents, private correspondence, press-cuttings and other records—an immense accumulation, which altogether would weigh several tons—have been carefully preserved. When compiling this official biography of him, I was granted access to these archives and also to her private diary

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through the courtesy of his widow, Frances, Countess Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, and I cannot praise highly enough the constant help and collaboration which she gave me in my task, or the unwearied patience with which she hunted out material, traced important documents, and read over and advised on my manuscript. Lady Lloyd-George is not, however, to be held responsible for what I have written. I was left perfect freedom to follow my own judgment, and am alone accountable for what is set down in the following pages.

I am grateful also to Lloyd George's younger brother, Mr. William George, for checking the details of the statesman's early life.

I had, finally, the advantage of bringing to my task a close personal acquaintance with Lloyd George. I worked with him for more than fifteen years, between 1925 and 1940; most of the time as his literary secretary. I admired him as a statesman. I had a deep affection for him as a man and a friend. I do not pretend that he was faultless or infallible. He was far too vividly human to be either. I have not sought to whitewash, and still less to denigrate, him. My aim has been to set down as accurately as possible a clear summary of what he did and why he did it. The final judgment on his life and achievements is not left to me to pass. It has long since been pronounced by a grateful nation, and will be confirmed in years to come by future generations who enter into the fairer opportunities and kindlier social conditions which he spent himself to establish.

MALCOLM THOMSON.

*Part I*  
SON OF WALES  
1863—1890



## CHAPTER I

### THE HERITAGE OF A WELSHMAN

GREAT men are not the predictable result of any special circumstances of parentage and early training. There is no infallible recipe for genius. Certain soils, it is true, favour its growth. Proverbially the sons of the manse, sons of schoolmasters, and—according to George Borrow—sons of shoemakers contribute a high proportion of the men who rise to greatness from humble homes; and it may be thought significant that David Lloyd George combined in some measure all these qualifications. His father was a schoolmaster; his uncle and adoptive father was both parson and shoemaker. But such circumstances carry no guarantee of greatness. There are many in every generation who grow up in such homes but achieve no marked distinction in after life. The man of outstanding brilliance who by the force of his talents and character changes the face of history must be reckoned an unpredictable gift of Providence.

Parentage and early training may not account for his exceptional ability; but inevitably they colour it, and to a large extent they determine its direction and its limitations. A man may outgrow his origins, but he cannot escape his heredity. He may become a citizen of the world, but he will carry with him the bent of thought and outlook imprinted upon him by the influence of those among whom his first years were passed. He may acquire fresh values and see wider horizons, but at critical moments in his career the instinctive tendencies he inherited, the ideas and impressions he gained in boyhood, are sure to sway his mind and influence his will.

Such was emphatically the case with David Lloyd George. His greatness is beyond dispute; it is admitted by friend and foe alike. His mark on the pages of history is indelible, and future generations will marvel at the wide range of his achievements and the innumerable ways in which he transformed the social life of his country and the course of world events. Yet this outstanding British statesman, who at his zenith overtopped all his contemporaries on the stage of world affairs, never ceased to be at heart the schoolmaster's son, the parson-shoemaker's nephew, the heir of a Welsh village and spokesman of Welsh non-conformity peasantry.

To gain a real understanding of the character of David Lloyd George, and of the motives which impelled him in his brilliant and at times tempestuous career, we must look for clues in the stock from which he

was bred and the atmosphere in which he was reared. His genius and driving force were his own; but the purposes and ideals to which they were harnessed had their origins in his race and his village home.

It may seem prosaically conventional to start a biography with an account of its hero's ancestry and early life. But certainly in this instance those facts are indispensable. Only with their aid can one interpret the rest of the story.

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David Lloyd George was a Welshman; and in that country of acutely divided local patriotisms, it is of no little significance that he combined in his person the racial strains of both North Wales and South Wales. His father was a member of a long-established Pembroke family, while his mother came from a historic Caernarvonshire stock.

They were peasant farmers in a land of peasant farmers. Most of the farms in Wales would be reckoned as smallholdings in England. David's great-grandfather, William George, settled with his wife, Anne, in a farm at Tresinwen, behind Strumble Head, north-west of Fishguard, towards the end of the eighteenth century. When a French expedition tried to invade Pembrokeshire in 1797, it landed only a mile and a half from Tresinwen farm, and Anne was no doubt among the red-cloaked Welshwomen who paraded round the cliffs and convinced the French that they were hemmed in by an innumerable force!

Their elder son, David, grew up and married Mary, the daughter of a South Pembroke farmer. They settled not far from his parents in a farm at Trecoed, and were renowned in the district for their warm-hearted piety and their untiring devotion to the local Baptist Church. Here, in 1820, was born their elder son, William, the father of the future Premier.

If farming was in William's blood, it was not a welcome tenant. He was a clever and studious youth, and had a great ambition to become a scholar, and follow some learned profession. His mother apprenticed him to a doctor in Fishguard, but here he found himself busy from morning till night doing nothing more intellectual than rolling pills and compounding potions; and when he sought to spend his nights in study, the doctor grudged him his candle. Proud and impatient, he dropped medicine and took a post as a pupil teacher at a school in London.

In 1844, when he was twenty-four years old, he applied for and got the position of master in a Unitarian school in Liverpool. Here he stayed for eight years, and during this time had the good fortune to meet and develop a warm friendship with Dr. James Martineau, the famous Unitarian divine, then a professor of philosophy at New College, Manchester. Returning to Pembrokeshire in 1852, William George ran a

grammar school for five years at Haverfordwest, and then obtained the headmastership of the Troed-yr-allt British School at Pwllheli, in Caernarvonshire.

Destiny looked on and smiled. For here the high-strung, quick-moving, restless scholar met Elizabeth Lloyd, the serene, sure-souled, quietly competent daughter of an ancient North Welsh family; met her and married her. It was a significant match. South Wales was blent with North Wales; the craggy promontories of Pembroke with the massive mountains of the Snowdon range. Most significant of all, a link had been forged with Llanystumdwy and with a certain shoemaker's cottage there, in which unknown potencies were concealed.

With a wife to provide for, William looked out for a better post, and at the end of 1859 the couple went off to Newchurch, in Lancashire. They did not like it. The place was cold and damp, and the blunt Lancashire manners of the workmen who formed the school committee grated on William, with his habit of Celtic courtesy and his sensitive dignity. Then in 1860 his mother died, and he overstrained himself in a feverish race to get to her funeral. Towards the end of 1862 he threw up the Newchurch job, and with his wife and their little daughter, Mary Ellen, went to take temporary charge of a school in Manchester.

Here, at No. 5 New York Place, a two-storied house in an unpretentious back street of a Manchester suburb, a son was born to them on 17th January, 1863. "David" he was named after his grandfather—the names David and William alternated in the George family from one generation to the next—and "Lloyd" after his mother.

The infant was not long exposed to the Manchester smoke which his father found trying, for the temporary engagement came to an end and the wandering schoolmaster turned homeward to Pembrokeshire. His health had begun to give way, and he thought an open air life would be better for him. Shedding his ambitions for a learned career, he leased a smallholding near Haverfordwest, and went back to the land. Less than eighteen months later, catching a chill when working in the garden, he developed pneumonia and died on 7th June, 1864.

A man whose life was of stainless honour and probity, who was diligent in the service of God and his fellows, who achieved a happy marriage and begot a family, one member of which would rise to supreme greatness, cannot be classed as a failure. But neither did he achieve success. Eager, clever, ambitious, William George is portrayed by tradition as a bright, attractive personality, brilliant in conversation, popular in local society, and his friendship with Dr. Martineau is a certificate of his intellectual quality. Yet somehow he was unable to stay his chosen course. He drifted from school to school, making no headway, and had already thrown his hand in before he died untimely in his forty-fourth

year. He bequeathed the best of his qualities to his first-born son, but passed away too soon to play a father's part in the training and education of the child.

The other side of young David's heredity, and the whole of his boyhood's environment—more potent by far than heredity in determining moral character and outlook—were provided by his mother and her family.

Elizabeth Lloyd was a typical daughter of Eifionydd—the district that links Snowdonia with Llyn, the Caernarvonshire peninsula forming the western extremity of the old North Welsh kingdom of Gwynedd, among whose rugged mountains the ancient British race has maintained itself against the successive inroads of Roman, Saxon, Dane and Norman. Her family, the Llwyds of Llwyndyrus, could reckon an ancient and honourable lineage in their native district. A Sir Gruffydd Lloyd and the astronomer Richard Lloyd figured among Elizabeth's reputed ancestors; but for long enough her later forbears had been of not more than local prominence among their neighbours of village and farmstead.

Elizabeth's father, Dafydd Llwyd, who was born in 1800, settled with his wife Rebecca, daughter of William Samuel of Pwllheli, in a comfortable and well-built stone cottage in the main street of Llanystumdwy, where he started in business as a master shoemaker. In those days, when railways were as yet unknown, and factory-made goods did not reach remote country districts, his was a highly important village industry, and he had two or three assistants working under him, fashioning footwear for everyone in the neighbourhood. Dafydd was not only a master-craftsman; he was also a man of letters, a poet and the secretary of the Cymrodorion, the Welsh literary society which existed in the district. He died young, in 1839, leaving a son, Richard, who inherited his shoemaking business, and two daughters—Ellen, who married a farmer in the adjoining parish of Criccieth, and Elizabeth, then a little girl of four years. Twenty years later, at Pwllheli, where her maternal grandparents had their home, William George met her and married her.

Elizabeth had a character which contrasted with and complemented that of her restless, brilliant husband. Her nature flowed deep and calm, never excited or impatient, but completely competent. A visitor to their home described afterwards with wonder how, while holding him in quiet but interested conversation, and seeming to move hardly at all, she prepared and served an excellent tea that took him utterly unawares. The incident may stand as a cameo of Elizabeth. You can see her, serene, unhurried, carrying out whatever work lay to her hand, the efficient but unobtrusive centre of her home.

She had need of all her patience and self-control when, less than five

years after her marriage, she was left a widow with two little children and another as yet unborn on a smallholding in far-off Pembrokeshire, among folk who were mostly strangers to her. She sent her brother a telegram: "Come Richard", and dropping everything he hurried off immediately to his sister.

There was little money in the stricken home, but Richard made the necessary arrangements for disposal of the lease of the holding and for a sale of the effects. A kind-hearted Liverpool solicitor, Thomas Goffey, who had known William in his schoolmastering days in that city, undertook the legal side of the business and carried it through very successfully for the widow. That, too, was a link in the chain of destiny, for the memory of his helpfulness gave Elizabeth a high opinion of the law as a service to humanity, and influenced her to choose it for her son when his future was being decided.

There could be no question of leaving the family on the Bwlford smallholding. Richard packed them up and brought them back to his cottage in Llanystumdwy, where he lived with his widowed mother, Rebecca. If he had ever thought of marrying and having a family of his own, he abandoned the notion thenceforward and devoted himself to the task of being a foster-father to his sister's fatherless children. The character and the future career of David Lloyd George were to owe practically everything to the Llanystumdwy community and to the shoemaker's cottage, and, above all, to the shoemaker uncle—an uncanonized Welsh saint and a prophet not without honour in his own country—a man whose quality was in its way as remarkable as that of his famous nephew.

To say that Llanystumdwy is a little Welsh village is to tell the stranger rather less than nothing about the setting in which Lloyd George was reared.

Very many English people think of the Welsh as a kind of provincial English; a bit peculiar in their ways, perhaps, and with a local dialect to which they cling rather perversely, but essentially a part of the English nation. That is an utterly mistaken conception. In race, and perhaps even more in long-sustained tradition and social and cultural outlook, the Welsh are a separate people, differing sharply and indeed antagonistically from their English neighbours.

It is no doubt true that the racial difference can be overstated. The extent to which Anglo-Saxon invading hordes drove away or massacred the Celtic inhabitants of Britain varied from region to region. Their ultimate advances in the West Country and the North-Western kingdom of Strathclyde were conquests rather than full colonization. So, while Wales and Cornwall remained fully Brythonic in population, a considerable Celtic element must also have survived in Wessex, the border

counties, Lancashire and Cumbria. It may well be that the English owe to the Celtic admixture with their heavier Teuton blood no little of the poetic and literary genius in which England has so long been rich, and those qualities of imagination which have produced her great inventors, scientists, explorers and pioneers.

But if the English racially absorbed a Celtic strain, it was controlled and coloured by their Anglo-Saxon social and cultural tradition. On the other hand, the survivors of the ancient British nation who still remained defiant and unconquered among the mountains of Wales preserved their own distinct language, habits and customs. Indeed, it is questionable whether even the Romans had ever succeeded in imposing much of their culture on the wilder regions of Gwynedd, though they drove their roads across its mountains and planted their military outposts at its strategic points. Norman and English kings from time to time invaded Wales, built castles, and now and again defeated and slew some Welsh prince who had defied them. But it was like carving the sea. The waters closed round the idle wound and surged untamable as before.

Centuries of embittered strife between Saxon and Welsh bred a savage antagonism to the English, traditions of which survive even to this day in the minds of the Cymry, sharpened by an age-long awareness of their numerical inferiority to their powerful neighbours. After Offa, the Saxon King of Mercia, had built his dyke in the eighth century from the Dee to the Wye, to pen back the British, any Welshman found east of it bearing arms had his right hand struck off. Any Englishman caught west of it by the Welsh was liable to be killed without mercy. Lapse of time and the steady growth of friendly and peaceful relations have dimmed the old race hatred, but have left a residue of secretiveness and suspicion of the English stranger. Though the Welsh are a warm-hearted people, exceedingly hospitable, and have all the instinctive courtesy of the Celt, traces of this lingering rancour can still be occasionally encountered.

But if the Welsh were agreed in their resolve to hold the English at bay, they were perpetually handicapped by their violent local and tribal patriotisms, which bred internal feud and disunion. Small as the country is, it has always been broken up into separate princedoms—Gwynedd, Powys, Deheubarth (North, Central and South Wales)—and only rarely did some leader arise who succeeded for a brief spell in winning the title of Prince of All Wales. "Inseparable, they would become insuperable," lamented Giraldus Cambrensis in the twelfth century, deploring their internecine quarrels. Seven centuries later, George Borrow found himself jeered at in Cardigan for speaking Welsh with an Anglesey accent, and in Carmarthen he met the bitterest contempt for the folk of North Wales. To this day the habit of close local patriotism and

xenophobia persists among the village communities of Wales. Lloyd George used to tell of a Caernarvonshire J.P., now deceased, who would always decide for a Welshman against an Englishman, whatever the evidence, and for a Caernarvonshire man against one from Merioneth!

But this strong racial patriotism of the Welsh has its valuable side. Their Celtic pride, edged by a jealous consciousness of English wealth and power, made them treasure the more eagerly their own distinctive cultural heritage—in particular, their wealth of poetry and literature. It would be far easier to find farm-hands and village artisans in Wales who could quote freely from their more famous poets than to find men of the same callings in England who could quote Shakespeare or Milton or Dryden. Music, too, and song, especially choral singing, are arts universally prized and practised by them. There is some evidence that part-singing was already habitual among the Britons at the time of the Roman Conquest.

Strongest of all the cultural influences among them stands religion; for the Welsh are by nature a profoundly religious people. Their Christianity dates from Roman times and through the Dark Ages it produced a stream of local saints and martyrs. It was instinctively sacerdotal, inheriting from Druidical days a regard for the priestly cult. But the Church in Wales suffered two very grave setbacks. The first was when after the Norman Conquest of Wales, carried out by Henry I, its Church was brought into subjection to Canterbury, and its bishops consecrated by the English Primate. That gave it an alien colour. Then came the Reformation, with its overthrow of their monasteries and its further lowering of the authority of their priesthood. The Welsh had little liking for the Reformation, and reluctantly acquiesced in it solely because it was imposed by their own Welsh royal family of the Tudors. But the effort begun by Henry VIII to assimilate the Welsh to the English and wipe out the Welsh language, an effort fostered by the Anglican Church and supported by the land-owning classes, brought about spiritual chaos. For two centuries religion in Wales sank to a very low ebb, to be awakened again in the middle years of the eighteenth century by the Methodist Revival.

This was a popular, a national, movement, carried by evangelists who preached the Gospel in the vernacular to their audiences. and the dormant religious fervour of the Welsh was widely kindled as preachers burning with missionary zeal penetrated their villages. Whitefield rather than Wesley was the dominating figure in the movement as it affected Wales, and Welsh Calvinistic Methodist Churches, Presbyterian in their church order, sprang up all over North Wales. In South Wales the evangelical revival was mainly carried forward by Baptists. But Methodists, Presbyterians, Baptists and Congregationalists all made great advances

throughout the Principality. The Dissenting chapel became the real village shrine, and the minister of the little Bethel took the post of religious leader, which had been so largely lost by the Anglican priesthood. Welsh village Nonconformity had the powerful attraction for the people that it was their own indigenous organization, native and patriotic, owing no allegiance to any alien authority. Here in their simple meeting-houses, reared by their own hands, led by a prophet of their own breed, they could sing their Welsh hymns and enjoy the rhapsodic eloquence of their native preachers. Welsh Bible in hand, they could study and endlessly debate the eternal problems of Divine purpose and human destiny. The chapel was their Druidical temple, their Eisteddfod, their theatre, their university, their senate house. Thither they flocked, scowling as they passed the Anglican church, symbol of an attempted spiritual tyranny by their ancient foes, the English, and supported and attended by a squirearchy which despised its own Welsh origins and pretended to be English.

With the spiritual awakening of Wales came a great hunger for education, which would not be denied. There were few schools in the country at first. Some had been opened during the early part of the eighteenth century by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. Later on, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, came the British Schools, an unsectarian movement started by Joseph Lancaster, the Quaker, and on its heels their more affluent rivals, the National Schools, instituted by the Church of England to provide simple elementary education in the villages. But before this the Welsh dissenters were reaching out for education by any means, and starting little schools in many a cottage home. From the time of the Evangelical revival, the Welsh have shown a devotion to learning and literature not unlike that which characterizes the Scots.

The little village of Llanystumdwy played an honourable part in this movement. Tradition relates that in 1745 Robert Jones of Llanystumdwy sent down to a Mme. Bevan in South Wales to ask for a schoolmaster to conduct a school in the village. A man was duly forthcoming, and Llanystumdwy became an educational centre for the district. More, it blossomed forth as a sphere of lively interest in literature and a breeding-ground for bardic efforts and poetic achievement. It was the meeting-place for a Cymrodorion Society, a local precursor of the Welsh National Cymrodorion, a fellowship for the study of Cymric literature and history. It met periodically for the reading of papers on appointed subjects of literary or bardic interest.

David Lloyd, the master shoemaker, grandfather of David Lloyd George, was the last secretary of the Llanystumdwy Cymrodorion, and himself a writer of Welsh poetry. When he died there was none to take

up his mantle, and the society faded away. But its tradition and the lively cultural life it had fostered still coloured the community in which the future statesman was to spend his boyhood. The village was far from being the mere circle of rude, unlettered yokels which one might have surmised from its rustic remoteness.

Learning and religion thrived there side by side, and provided the people with their main interests. At some time towards the end of the eighteenth century a couple of Baptist evangelists from South Wales penetrated the ranges of Gwynedd, and their labours resulted in the formation of a number of little Baptist communities among the villages. Too small and poor to support full-time paid ministers, these groups took their religion from their New Testaments and met in cottages for worship and fellowship. Even when they were large enough to require a chapel, it was hard to induce the squire to sell them a site for one, and they were driven to build their little Bethel or Pisgah on some corner of a field, often remote from the village, where a good-natured farmer might agree to spare them the ground.

Not unnaturally some of these little churches were attracted by the doctrines of Campbell, the American Baptist, who started a movement which he called the "Disciples of Christ". Its aim was to escape from all the warring creeds and maintain a simple New Testament Christianity, with no professional ministry or priesthood, practising baptism by immersion on profession of faith and meeting weekly like the early disciples for the breaking of bread.

One of the Baptist churches founded by the South Wales evangelists was in the Llanystumdwy district, and David Lloyd became its leading elder. Under his guidance it adopted the Campbellite order, and after David died his son Richard Lloyd took his place and became the unpaid minister of the community. They could get no site for a chapel in the village, but William Williams, a farmer who owned land behind Criccieth, furnished them with a site there on which to build their meeting-house and maintain their God's-acre. It was a two-mile walk each way from Llanystumdwy, but to sturdy Welsh folk that was a small price to pay for the privilege of worshipping God as their conscience dictated.

When William George, the South Welsh Baptist, came to Pwllheli, seven miles from Llanystumdwy, to teach, it is easy to understand that he would be drawn to a daughter of a family standing so notably for the faith and order in which he had been reared. Baptists were not numerous in that part of the country. The Georges were in L.G.'s boyhood almost the only Baptist family in Llanystumdwy, where most of the village folk attended the flourishing Calvinistic Methodist Chapel. There was also in the village a tiny meeting-house maintained by a little group of

Independents—an obsolescent sect of hyper-Calvinist Congregationalists. Theological discussion was lively and keen between the advocates of these variant creeds, providing the village with plenty of intellectual exercise; and the forge and Richard Lloyd's workroom were constantly being turned into debating halls.

Such, in mind and spirit, was the village of Llanystumdwy to which Richard Lloyd brought back his widowed sister Elizabeth with her little children: Mary, in her third year; David, in his second; and William, born shortly after the family arrived.

Socially, it was in the main a community of artisans, tradesmen, small farmers and farm workers, and families of seamen. At that time there would hardly be a home in the village from which some member had not gone to follow the sea. In the surrounding countryside were a sprinkling of larger houses, country seats of landowners and homes of well-to-do residents, but between their occupants and the village folk there lay the two-fold gap of creed and language. The gentry supported the Anglican Church. They spoke English and often tried to escape from the idea that they were Welsh and to regard themselves as English. They cultivated a scorn for the Welsh language and Welsh national feeling which is hard to realize today, when Welsh holds its honoured place in school and university, and sectarian bitterness has largely disappeared as a result of the disestablishment of the Welsh Church.

Physically, the village was larger than it is today. Its sturdy, stone-built houses and cottages made a roughly cruciform pattern, spreading beside the main road on both sides of the point where it crosses the river Dwyfor (Dwy Fawr or Big Dwy) by a fine old stone bridge, and running up side-roads that branch off near the bridge. The Dwyfor, a mountain stream rising on the slopes of Tal-y-Mignedd in the Snowdon range, has grown to an extremely picturesque river by the time it reaches Llanystumdwy, where it comes tumbling down a rocky valley in a boulder-strewn channel, pours under the noble arch of the bridge, and flows on through a wooded dale to join with the waters of the Dwyfach (Little Dwy) in its final stage across a strip of alluvial plain to the sea.

The sea-shore is less than a mile from the village, and the fine sweep of Cardigan Bay is in full view to the south; Harlech Castle, immortalized in stirring song, Barmouth and the heights of Cader Idris and Plynlimon. On a very clear day, from the higher ground behind the village, one can see the hills of distant Pembroke. Westward stretches the Lleyn Peninsula, studded with abrupt mountains, and further still the Wicklow Hills can sometimes be discerned like a shadow on the horizon. To the north-east rises the great massif of Eryri, which the prosaic call Snowdonia, its thronging mountains a tangle of blue and purple peaks, with the sedate, dignified hump of Moel Hebog in the forefront.

## THE HERITAGE OF A WELSHMAN

It is a land to awaken the imagination, to breed poets, to fill the soul with wonder, and rouse that

sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean and the living air,  
And the blue sea, and in the mind of man.

It has much to say to an eager boy, if he has the hearing ear. It said much to young David as he grew up in the intellectually and spiritually alert atmosphere of Llanstumdwy. Later, he was to repeat some of its messages to the world.

This, then, was in brief his heritage. A Welshman, he was a member of a small people which clung desperately, grimly, to its independence, its language, its poetry and songs and traditions. A Nonconformist, he was a member of a locally small and impoverished sect, bitterly defiant of the Established Church and of the squirearchy with which it was leagued. At the same time his uncle and guardian was a leading figure in village and chapel, and his home was the centre of local culture and literary and theological discussion. Around him stretched all the loveliness of an enchanted landscape. His playground was the tumbling torrent of the Dwyfor, his playmates the children of sturdy Welsh peasants, poor by English standards, but with none of the truckling subservience that was then common east of Offa's Dyke—filled rather with that Celtic democracy of the clan which follows the leader but calls no man master.

Such a setting could not create greatness. But if greatness were there, it could do much to school and inspire it. The marks of that schooling were in due time to be manifest to the world.

## CHAPTER II

### VILLAGE BOYHOOD

AS you approach the middle of Llanystumdwy village, coming from Criccieth, you will notice on your right a fine old double-fronted, two-storeyed cottage, with an outbuilding tacked on to its far end. It bears no plaque nor label to distinguish it from the other cottages, though you may sense a certain solid, unpretentious dignity about it. This was the home to which Richard Lloyd brought back in 1864 his widowed sister and her young family; the home where David spent his boyhood.

The front door opens on a central passage, from which stairs ascend to the upper floor. On the left is a comfortable living-room whose large fireplace was at that time flanked by a settle. On the right is a smaller room, originally used by the Lloyds and their workmen for storing and cutting up leather; but transformed by Richard into a study room for the children as they grew older. At the far end of the passage are the scullery and larder, and a door opening on a fair-sized garden, well stocked with fruit trees and vegetable beds. Between house and garden a paved path leads to the stone shed at the end of the cottage. This was Richard's workshop, where he sat by the window looking out on the road and made boots and shoes for the people of the village and countryside.

Is there something about the craft of making and mending shoes that nurtures the mind and soul of man? Shoemakers and cobblers are very frequently kindly and thoughtful folk, unexpectedly well-read, quietly religious. Dr. Carey, pioneer of modern missions, started life as a Northamptonshire cobbler. Perhaps, as the hands are steadily busy on the friendly leather, the mind has leisure for contemplation, and the eyes, glancing up from the last, mark the passers-by with understanding and sympathy. The local cobbler knows them all, their family history, their interests and problems. He has shod them from babyhood. Their work and play are recorded on the footwear they bring him to patch. And if there is a lull in the hammering and stitching he can pick up some favourite book, and read, and ponder.

Richard Lloyd had a recess in the wall beside his bench, where he kept whatever book he was reading, and he would often snatch a short interval when work was slack to read on. Or if some point struck him which might be used in his sermon on the next Lord's Day, he would jot it down and slip it into the hole, where he habitually kept his notes for future sermons. When young David and his brother William were

schoolboys they would sometimes snatch an opportunity to pry there, and glean advance information about the next Sunday's discourse.

The presiding authority of the little home in those early days was the widowed grandmother, Rebecca Lloyd. She was the real manager of the shoemaking business, for Richard was utterly uncommercial in mind, and cared only for turning out first-class work, beautifully and lovingly finished—the work of an artist. He would never send bills to his customers, and was embarrassed if one of them offered to settle an account. Left to himself, he would soon have run the business on to the rocks, and indeed he very nearly did so after his mother's death, when he was only saved by the quiet efficiency of his sister.

Rebecca Lloyd, an energetic and masterful woman, went tramping round the countryside, collecting overdue accounts in person. Little David, whom she doted on and did her best to spoil, often accompanied her on these walks, which would sometimes be as much as three or four miles in length. No doubt this very early practice laid the foundation of his later capacity for walking great distances.

His grandmother's methods are of interest for the light they shed on one aspect of Welsh manners. She would take the bills in her basket and call round on the local farmers who owed them.

"Ah, how do you do, Mrs. Jones," she would greet the farmers' wife. "Passing your house I was, so I thought I would look in and see how you were!"

"Come in, come in, Mrs. Lloyd," the good woman would reply, perfectly aware of the object of the visit. "Come in and sit down a minute. Indeed, it was very kind of you to call. Tired you must be with the walk. But the kettle is just boiling, and you will have a cup of tea with me now you are here. And how is Richard, and your poor Elizabeth? And is this David? Growing fine, he is!" And with ready chatter Mrs. Jones would conduct her visitor into the kitchen, settle her into a chair, and have a pleasant gossip while the tea was brewing.

"Well, it is going I must be," Rebecca would announce presently. "Nice it was seeing you. And I am glad your husband is doing so well." And she would move towards the door, saying nothing of the purpose that had brought her.

"While you are here, Mrs. Lloyd, perhaps we can settle for what my man owes your Richard for those boots? Fine boots they are, too. We meant to pay for them before, but I could not find the bill."

"Oh, that doesn't matter whatever. Any time will do. We can let you have a fresh bill. Indeed, now you mention it, I think perhaps I have a copy here!" And fumbling in her basket, Rebecca would draw out the account and collect the debt. So with the utmost tact and courtesy the business would be settled, neither of the women giving a hint from first

to last that they had both been perfectly aware all along why the visit was paid.

Now that was a quite characteristic Welsh proceeding. Many English people may think it circuitous, deceptive, lacking in straightforwardness. To the Welsh it will appear tactful, polite, well-mannered. The blunt, forthright, plain-spoken manners on which Englishmen pride themselves—especially those in the North Country—would be condemned by the Welsh as rude, clumsy, ill-bred. The Welshman sees neither grace nor courtesy in the direct approach. He will always, if possible, take an oblique route to an awkward issue. The Englishman thinks him a twister. He thinks the Englishman a boor. Which is right? It is a question of differing codes of manners. As there are twenty Englishmen for every Welshman the Welsh view gets outvoted; but that does not finally prove it wrong.

In studying the career of Lloyd George, it is well to bear in mind that he was a Welshman with a Welshman's code—a code which to him and those among whom he was reared was entirely honourable and praiseworthy. Its principle was to spare people's feelings and avoid putting them out of countenance; indeed, to bring a touch of artistry into social dealings. This is a typically Celtic trait. Its danger, of course, is that it may be carried to the point of deception. The English cult of outspoken frankness can deteriorate no less into the opposite vice of a brutal trampling on people's feelings.

The household economy of the Llanystumdwy home was of a very simple and frugal order. The Lloyds were not exactly poor. Indeed, compared with most of their village neighbours they were affluent, and tradition records that the young "Lloyds", as David and his brother William were usually called, were reckoned the best-dressed and most tidily turned out boys in the village. But peasants do not easily spend money, even if they have it, and the living standards of the Welsh peasantry in those days might seem parsimonious to those reared in a different tradition. Besides, the addition of three hungry, growing children and their mother to the household was no light burden for Richard to bear. The cheapest kinds of meat were usually procured by Elizabeth for her family, such as sheep's heads and other offals, which at that time could be bought for a few pence, and Lloyd George used in later life to point out with pride that these offals, despised by many in his youth, had now been proved by the scientists to be richest in vitamins. "Look at how the lion eats," he would add. "That powerful beast always makes his first meal off the heart and liver of the antelope he has killed, and leaves the joints till later! Instinct tells him what is the best part."

Potatoes and buttermilk figured largely in the family diet, and the treat at Sunday breakfast was half an egg. In the years of his success a



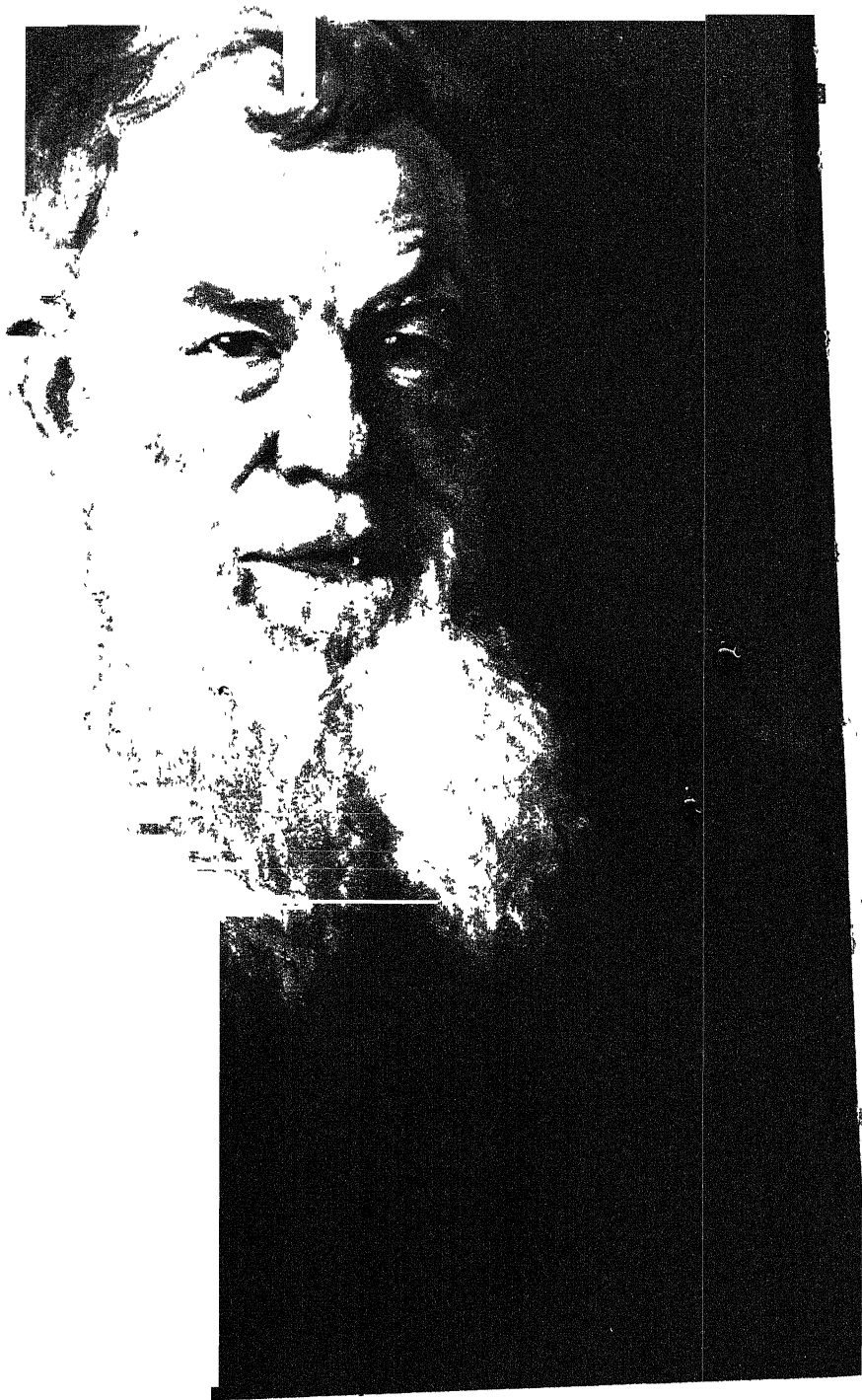
*[Photograph by George Boardman]*

The Village Smithy, Llanystumdwy

*[Photograph by George Boardman]*

Pen Y Maes Chapel, Criccieth





Richard Lloyd

film was made of L.G.'s early life, which truthfully showed his mother dividing an egg between two children. But such economy was in fact by no means unfamiliar in the mid-nineteenth century in homes more affluent than the Llanystumdwy cottage.

There came indeed a time, after the grandmother died, when money ran low and the family were very near poverty. Richard never learned to collect his accounts, and a Building Society in Liverpool in which Elizabeth had invested most of her savings failed. L.G. used afterwards to recall how his mother was in the habit of buying every week a bag of meal from a travelling salesman, and sometimes during this period she would examine her empty purse and ruefully send him away without making the habitual purchase. That week the family would exist on short commons. The sight of his mother's face on the occasions when this occurred haunted L.G. for the remainder of his life.

At the further side of the village, across the bridge over the Dwyfor, stood the church and the National School. Whether or not the educational and literary tradition of Llanystumdwy had drawn him there, the fact is on record that David Evans, the village schoolmaster in Lloyd George's boyhood, was a man of unusual culture and with great gifts as a teacher. Speaking on 8th September, 1917, at Llanystumdwy, the then Prime Minister declared that he had sat at the feet of a great schoolmaster, a man with a genius for teaching.

The school, which has since been enlarged, then consisted of two rooms, in which the different standards were distributed. The headmaster, who was aided by a couple of pupil teachers and a monitor, had his desk in the larger classroom. Teaching was of course for the most part concentrated on the "Three R's", with a due allowance of religious instruction and a little geography and history. But the master gathered beside him a small group of senior scholars whom he led on into the mysteries of euclid and algebra.

In 1867, when he was four years old, David started his school career. He had long ere this learned to read, and he read swiftly. Gifted with a splendid memory, he was able to master his lessons with no apparent labour. As was fitting in a future Chancellor of the Exchequer he showed a remarkable aptitude for mathematics, with especial skill in mental arithmetic. That fact may have some bearing on the declaration of a leading Treasury official, many years later, that when L.G. was dealing with statistical problems his working was all wrong, but his results were always right!

Among themselves, the Llanystumdwy folk spoke almost always in Welsh. The teaching at the school, however, was exclusively in English. No doubt what helped young David to achieve the complete bilingual mastery which he retained all through his life was the fact that he had a

passion for reading, and the books, too, were in English. His uncle had an excellent small library, not limited to religious works. His father, too, had naturally been a serious student, and one day, rummaging in the loft, David came on a trunk full of his father's books—English classics, histories and translations of ancient authors. He feasted voraciously in this larder of stored-up learning.

Many years afterwards L.G.'s daughter Olwen, browsing among second-hand books in the Caledonian Market—"All on this stall, 2d."—picked up a volume of Shakespeare and found inside it the name of her grandfather, William George, in his own fine handwriting.

With his father's books upstairs and those of his uncle below, David had an ample supply of reading-matter, and would always have one or more books on hand. He was not, however, fastidious in his literary tastes, and would devour boys' light literature and adventure tales, when he could get hold of them, as eagerly as the more solid and serious works stored up in his home; though he did not let his serious-minded uncle know about these relaxations. Indeed, his love of tales of adventure never left him, and at a mature age he still revelled in Wild West stories as an interlude between more sober studies.

His quick, restless curiosity might have made him a superficial and inconsequent reader but for the influence of Richard Lloyd, whose attitude to life was marked by that strain of ascetic puritanism and high moral earnestness which is commonly displayed by strong Evangelicals. One day he found young David discarding a quarter-read book in favour of another which had caught his attention. Richard took the second book away and handed his nephew the first one. "Read what you will," he told him, "but whatever book you start, read it to the end. If it is worth reading at all, it is worth reading through."

Lloyd George took that advice to heart, and never forgot it. As a consequence he developed in early boyhood the habit of reading conscientiously through every book he started, and the habit persisted in his later life. He read swiftly and very widely, and remembered what he had once read. People who assumed that, because he had received no higher academic training in public school or university, he must be only feebly literate, were ludicrously wide of the mark. He had his favourite fields, as most men have, but they were wide fields, and he knew them well. Apart from the adventure stories in which he found recreation, and the legal textbooks and parliamentary bluebooks which he mastered for purposes of his career in law and politics, he was extremely well versed in ancient and modern history, particularly in the histories of wars and military strategy. He could discuss and analyse with complete mastery of their details the Greek struggles in the Peloponnesian war, the campaigns of Hannibal, or the tactics of Lee and Stonewall Jackson. He read nearly

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all the great works of fiction, old and new; biographies; *belles-lettres*; some, though not all, of the poets; and most of the notable books on social, political and international problems. With his remarkable memory for what he had read, his mind became very richly stored—far more so than are the minds of many men highly respected for their erudition.

In after years, too, he would relate how, when he was not more than 10 or 11 years old, he used to walk to Portmadoc to borrow the London paper from a friend who received it, in order to get the full report of Gladstone's speeches. Sometimes the paper had already been lent to someone else, and then L.G. would have to wait two or three days for it. But in this way, from the age of 11, he followed the progress of Gladstone's political campaigns.

But for all his love of books, the boy was far from being a mere bookworm. The world outside called to him, and with his active mind and sturdy body he came to be a ringleader in the games and sports of the village youngsters.

Here, however, they were faced with a serious handicap. Llanystumdwy was a small village in a comparatively sparsely populated countryside, surrounded by woods and fields and hills; and yet in all that empty landscape there was no playground or playing-field for the children! To play anywhere in the open, they had to trespass; and the woodlands and river were strictly preserved.

Needless to say, they trespassed. Various tales have come down about the poaching exploits of the boy David, and some of them no doubt are founded on fact. Two of his schoolmates were the proud possessors of dogs of a sort; not perhaps very efficient dogs for the pursuit and capture of rabbits, but ready to give chase to them. It was fun to take one of these dogs on a hunting expedition round the fields and woods, dodging unsympathetic farmers and prowling gamekeepers. The river, too, was a ready-made sporting field. Its trout and salmon were poached, of course. They are poached to this day, though not so much by schoolboys as by older hands, skilled in the use of a net by night. David sometimes tried his luck there with a rod and line, in the use of which he became very skilful.

It would however be misleading to suggest that the unlicensed pursuit of game, whether furred or finned, was the main amusement of the village children. If they had no proper playground, they made good use of the roadway—innocent in those days of motors—of the cottage gardens, the surrounding lanes, and above all the Dwyfor, with its boulder-strewn bed and, in its lower reaches, with little islands to be reached by stepping-stones and turned into pirate ships or beleaguered forts. Lloyd George developed a quality of lively and inventive leadership in these games. Naturally, too, he got the blame for any damage done. "It's that David Lloyd has done it!" one of the villagers would remark if a fence was

broken or a garden-bed trampled. Thus early in life he learned the lesson, which was to be often repeated, that the one at the top will be held responsible for any blunders committed by his underlings.

Beyond question, the biggest and most pervasive influence in his life during those years of boyhood was religion. It was in the air he breathed at home, where his uncle, a man of the sincerest piety and of single-minded honour, tested all things by the touchstone of his Christian faith. Family worship there was no stale formality, for Richard, like Moses of old, was wont to talk with God face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. Small wonder that, with the quick imitativeness of childhood, David is remembered to have started preaching to his brother and sister at a very tender age from the pulpit of the cottage staircase, emphasizing his points by banging with a stick!

Religion was the chief intellectual interest among the villagers at large. They were nearly all Nonconformists—Methodists, Baptist or Independent. The extempore sermons of their local preachers were their weekly treat and subsequent theme of discussion and analysis. Their most familiar songs—and singing has from prehistoric times been the favourite art and pastime of the Welsh—were their Welsh hymns, set to poignant, nerve-tightening tunes, plaintive or exultant but never stolid or prosaic, and sung in parts with adventitious harmonies.

The sectarianism of the different Nonconformist bodies was not carried to extremes, and Lloyd George learned tonic sol-fa as a boy in classes held at the Methodist chapel by a local farmer, Dwyfor Jones, who was an enthusiast for choral music. But the denominational differences of the village provided them with an endless theme for discussion and debate. The fact that the Lloyds, as Baptists, were in a small minority among the Calvinistic Methodists and Independents of Llanystumdwy gave young David constant opportunity for joyous controversy with his fellows, and even with local masters of argument such as the village blacksmith, an Independent. He came to these discussions armed with the careful teachings of his uncle, reinforced with his own quick wit, and in them he laid the foundations of the forensic ability which was to serve him so well before a larger public.

The contests with fellow dissenters were in the nature of friendly matches. The really bitter religious struggle, maintained by the villagers with the full fervour of their evangelical Protestantism, was that against the Established Church. A similar antagonism prevailed also at that time between Church and Dissent in the English countryside, where parson and squire not infrequently set themselves to suppress those schismatic conventicles which were at variance with the established order and bred an unwelcome spirit of independence among their flocks and tenantry. But in Wales the hostility of Church and Chapel was nourished by antipathies

not only of creed and class, but of race. For the Church was regarded as the tool of Anglican domination over the minds and consciences of the Welsh. The local landowning families who were its main supporters tended to have scant sympathy with Welsh national sentiment; so racial patriotism combined with religious zeal to heighten the ardour of dissent among the Welsh peasantry.

To the eyes of a boy there are, in matters of morals or religion, no greys. Everything is white or black. To a Welshman, heir of a race that had been perpetually engaged in fighting against alien intrusion from before the dawn of history, resistance to the oppressor was a joyous necessity. Richard Lloyd had not failed to impress on his nephews that the Established Church was tainted with error in its teaching and practices; that Ash Wednesday was a relic of Papistry, infant baptism a superstitious and unscriptural perversion of the Christian rite, and the Church liturgy a mass of "vain repetitions such as the heathen use". David became a missionary among his fellows to warn them against being ensnared by the doctrinal teaching thrust upon them at their National School, and a ringleader in courses of revolt.

It does not appear that the schoolmaster was overmuch given to trying to proselytize his Nonconformist pupils, but it was one of the essential aims of National Schools to train up the children to be adherents of the Established Church. Their religious instruction included a good drilling in the catechism. On Ash Wednesdays they were marched to the church for a service. Young Lloyd George had no mind to bow down his head in the House of Rimmon, and with others like-minded he started the practice of breaking away from the procession and making off to the woods. Punishments were of no avail, and the revolt grew greater yearly till the Ash Wednesday parade had to be abandoned.

There was another annual event at the school which David took a leading part in breaking up. This was the occasion when the squire and parson and school manager and other local persons of prominence came to hear the scholars repeat the creed and show their paces in the catechism. Lloyd George's dissenting soul, inspired by his uncle's teaching, revolted at this imposition of false doctrine, and one year he plotted to organize a combined stand against it. He secretly bound all the other youngsters to join in keeping complete silence when called upon to answer the catechism questions. The day came. The gentry were assembled, with Squire Nanney and the rector at their head, and the schoolmaster mustered his pupils, eager to display the results of his teaching.

He put the familiar questions. There was no response. He commanded. He pleaded. The youngsters stared, wooden-faced. At last he called on them to join in repeating the Apostles' Creed. His distress at their silence grew painful—too painful at last for little William, the ring-

leader's young brother, a gentle, peace-loving soul, who was devoted to the master. His treble began to pipe the familiar words. The spell was broken, and the others took up the refrain. David was left alone in defiant silence and in due course suffered a rebel's penalty. But if the battle was lost the war was won, and the practice of forcing Nonconformist children to repeat the doctrines of the Establishment was thereafter abandoned.

Mastery of the church Catechism is, of course, the normal preface to confirmation, and one of the schoolmaster's duties was to prepare and present as many of his young catechumens as possible for confirmation in due course. It came to David's knowledge that a school friend, William Williams, of sound Calvinistic Methodist stock, was to be confirmed—his parents having good-naturedly given way to the entreaties of the rector. David was horrified. Dissenters did not practise confirmation. Therefore it was wrong, and he must save his friend. He waylaid the erring William, all dressed up in his Sunday best, on his way to the ceremony, and wrestled for his soul with passionate zeal and fervent oratory. His ardour was irresistible, and William followed him over a wall and through back ways to Richard Lloyd's workroom, where the two received a warm commendation of their enlightened course. A glad "Well done!" from Richard was no mean compensation for the forfeited episcopal benediction.

It is not surprising that Bunyan's *Holy War* was one of L.G.'s favourite books in his boyhood. Yet his religious life did not entirely consist of theological controversy or sectarian strife. There was the tramp by the hill road, three times every Sunday, to Pen-y-Maes, the little chapel behind Criccieth, where his uncle preached; and the sermons, delivered with considerable oratorical power, were reflections of the deep spirituality and devotion of the preacher. The afternoon gathering was the Sunday School, attended by the whole flock, young and old, for the reading and study of Holy Writ. On the journey home from these meetings young David would discuss with his uncle the religious issues that had been the theme of sermon or biblical study. On Wednesday nights he attended the Band of Hope at Moriah, the Calvinistic Methodist chapel in Llanystumdwy, where the teaching of total abstinence was combined with singing practice. Religion, in fact, was at that time for a Welsh Dissenter the matrix of his education, his arts, his social life, and not infrequently of his political interests.

That David would eventually find a career in politics could not of course be foreseen in his boyhood, but his village upbringing gave him a strong political bias. The election of 1868 occurred when he was five years old—just old enough (for he was a particularly precocious child) to receive vivid impressions of its atmosphere and results. A Liberal candidate was

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standing for the county against the Tory nominee, Douglas Pennant, who was the choice of the county landowners. Several of the tenant farmers were indiscreet enough to vote for the Liberal. At that time open voting was still the practice, for the Ballot Act of 1872 was only passed four years later. Most of the landowners in the county were strong Conservatives, and still clung to the feudal theory that their tenants were retainers, bound to follow their lord's lead in political affairs. They were furious at this display of independence, and at the next quarter-day all the farmers who had voted for the Liberal or had abstained from voting for the Tory were given notice to leave their farms.

Now Richard Lloyd was a Liberal—one of the few avowed Liberals in the village, though many of his neighbours were Liberal in sympathy, even if they dared not risk open profession of Liberal views. The five-year-old David remembered waving a flag in the Liberal procession that passed through the village during the election contest. But what turned an inherited allegiance into a passionate faith was the spectacle of neighbours thrown out on the road for daring to vote Liberal; schoolmates disappearing from the class because their fathers had been driven away by their Tory landlord. The memory burned deep, and as he grew older it was kept alive by frequent reminders of the affair in the political discussions which went on at the forge—the village parliament, as he later described it.

Children have a keen sense of justice, undimmed as yet by the ulterior considerations which too often warp the judgment of their elders. David felt these evictions to be unjust, criminal, wicked. His righteous resentment struck its roots deeply into his soul. Landlords were wicked people, and their power over their tenants was an evil thing. The landowners who had unwittingly incurred his condemnation would no doubt have smiled contemptuously if they had been told that a little Welsh boy was indignant with them; and indeed they had only followed a practice which their forbears regarded as the natural order—a practice which in England would continue to be widespread among landowners for another full generation. But a time was to come when they or their successors would have good cause to wish that the evictions of 1868 could have been undone, or their memory blotted from the Welsh lad's mind.

Those discussions at the village forge played a very important part in forming the boy's mind and determining his career. In after years he described the smithy as his first Parliament, where night after night they discussed all the abstruse questions relating to this world and the next, in politics, in theology, in philosophy and science. Religious issues were the central theme of discussion there, and even more so at the other Council Chamber, his uncle's workroom. People took their religion very seriously in the latter part of the nineteenth century, especially in Nonconformist

circles, where it was the dominant intellectual interest. Their culture was of the kind which Matthew Arnold dubbed "Hebraistic"—profoundly concerned with issues of moral conduct and eternal destiny. Politics, in the village discussions of Llanystumdwy, became a branch of theology.

To understand Lloyd George, it is essential to keep this early background in mind. In the unusually thoughtful and intellectual village community where he grew up, religion with its uncompromising imperatives and infinite horizons was the daily theme of conversation, and the touchstone for all issues. Throughout his boyhood and youth he was trained to regard political problems as another aspect of the same eternal warfare between light and darkness, truth and error, as inspired the eloquence of the pulpit, the passion of the evangelist. Truth, it appeared to him, was evangelical Nonconformity such as his uncle taught, founded on the Word of God, fighting for freedom from priestcraft, popery, and the paganism of sacerdotal ritual. Truth, therefore, was with the dissenting Welsh peasantry in their revolt against the alien Anglican Church; with them in their struggle against the Anglicized Tory squirearchy that sought to repress their religious and political freedom. The atmosphere which L.G. breathed in boyhood was saturated with the conviction that defence of the humble against the mighty was the heart of the Gospel, that the fight for Liberalism was a holy war, that Welsh Nationalism was a crusade.

The passion with which he accepted and upheld this creed was all his own. But the strongly religious tincture by which it was dyed owed very much to the influence of his uncle, Richard Lloyd.

Destiny placed Richard Lloyd in a remote Welsh village, and he was content to fulfil his days in that obscure setting. Had he been called to some far more conspicuous career he would no doubt have won well-merited renown, for he had great gifts and a noble character. But his part in the larger events of world history was played at second hand, through the nephew whose mentor and inspiration he was, and whose character he did most to form.

He was thoughtful, intellectual and widely read. His library, which contained no trash, provided young David with first-class reading. He was deeply, sincerely religious. His creed was of puritan severity, and many might deem it narrow and repellent, but Richard Lloyd himself was not repellent. He was too full of the love of God for that. L.G. used to tell how he had seen his uncle go out of his way to grasp the hand, in public, of one whose chief fault was a liking for drink, for which his fellows shunned him, but who was a kindly fellow. But Richard Lloyd obstinately refused to greet a man, reeking with the odour of sanctity and success, who had a hard and cruel heart. He was a strict but kindly mentor of his young wards. While he was no sour hater of enjoyment, his life

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was too fully surrendered to duty and devotion for him to find delight in self-indulgent pleasures. His supreme happiness was to live uprightly, to act honourably, to do sound work and to serve his fellows for the glory of God.

As unpaid minister of the "Disciples of Christ"—the little Campbellite Baptist community at Criccieth—he added to his week-day tasks of shoe-making the further responsibility of preparing sermons for the Sunday services. This was a serious burden. Sermons were sermons in those days, lengthy discourses well filled with doctrine and sound homiletics, and delivered to audiences who were confirmed sermon-tasters and critics; and in Wales, especially, the standard of pulpit oratory was high. Sermons were, and indeed are to this day, the highest form of Welsh religious art.

Richard Lloyd was a preacher of eloquence and distinction. Young David, sitting under him, saw how an audience could be gripped and moved. He listened and learned and imitated. His earliest attempts at oratory were sermons, and indeed he remained a preacher all his life. His finest political orations were essentially sermons, Welsh in their touches of poetic imagery, evangelical in their effort not only to convince the head but to reach and move the heart. To the end he was his uncle's pupil.

Richard Lloyd was not only a preacher but a pastor, earnest in the cure of souls. He renounced personal ease to serve the flock committed to his charge, just as he gave up thought of wife and family to devote himself to caring for his sister Elizabeth and her children. In such tasks he developed the gifts of a counsellor, wise to see beyond muddled motives and self-interests and to urge the essentially honest and worthy course. So long as his uncle lived, Lloyd George used to turn to him at critical times to seek his counsel. Few were the occasions when he decided to act contrary to it, and still fewer those when he did so without afterwards regretting his decision.

"Nothing must be done except what is right!" wrote Richard Lloyd once in his diary, when faced with a difficult problem. It was the keynote of his character. Such was the influence under which young David grew up. Small wonder that religion dominated and filled his life as a boy. When he reached his teens, he was baptised on profession of faith by his uncle in the stream that ran in front of the little chapel, Pen-y-Macs, at the back of Criccieth. Chapel and Sunday School and Temperance Society were his clubs and training ground. In later years his questing mind might travel far outside the narrow confines of that circle of teaching, as destiny drew his feet into paths very different from the Llanystumdwy lanes. But his soul had been dyed indelibly with the hue of that prophetic devotion and the eternal imperative of duty in which his youth had been steeped. When he turned to politics, it was in the temper and with the fervour of an evangelist.

### CHAPTER III

#### STARTING A CAREER

“WHAT shall this child be?” When David Lloyd George entered his fourteenth year an answer had to be attempted to that question. He had long since acquired the elementary education which was all that the village school professed to offer. Most of its pupils left at the age of 12, but he and a few other brighter children stayed on longer in the special class run by David Evans, the headmaster. Now the time was coming when he must start his career.

It might have seemed natural for him to follow his uncle at the last, and serve his apprenticeship to the shoemaking business of the Lloyds. But to this there were several objections. The first was that David was no handicraftsman. He had little manual skill. Indeed, in later life he could make a hopeless mess of trying to sharpen a pencil or even tying his own bootlaces! In the second place, his father had been a professional man, and his mother and uncle, proud of that fact, wanted the boys to maintain that standard. Finally, it was already evident that David’s intellectual powers were of a quite exceptional order. He was as naturally qualified for some learned profession as he was unfitted to be a journeyman. He was remarkably well-read for his age, a quick student, effective in debate, gifted with eloquence. Clearly the tools for his career were stored in his head, not in his fingers.

The most obvious and ready opening for him might have seemed to be the teaching profession. David Evans would have been delighted to take him on as a pupil teacher. Indeed, four of his companions in the master’s special class followed this course, and three of them later took Orders in the Church, one, Camber Williams, rising to become a residential Canon of St. David’s. But to teaching there was an insuperable barrier: the church door. He would have had to join the Anglican Church, and such an act was as unthinkable to him as it was to his uncle.

Richard Lloyd would have wished him to study medicine, but this was ruled out, not only because the course was long and too costly for the modest means of the Lloyds, but because Lloyd George himself recoiled too strongly from pain and sickness to have any vocation for the healing profession. His religious upbringing and gifts of oratory would no doubt have led him to the pulpit if he had been a Methodist or Congregationalist, but the Disciples of Christ had no paid ministry. This was a fact of immense historic import. For thereby the country and the world lost a great preacher and gained a great statesman.

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Remained the law. The bar, no doubt, was out of reach, but it might not prove impossible to become a solicitor. A college course was not necessary: the road lay through a clerkship in a solicitor's office. The idea had a strong appeal for the lad. Had not his hero, Abraham Lincoln, been a solicitor? Perhaps what weighed in the scale even more heavily was his mother's wish. Ever since she had received kindness and help in the dark hour of her bereavement from Thomas Goffey, the Liverpool solicitor, she had regarded the lawyer's calling with veneration, as one in which a man could nobly serve his fellows, and had nursed a secret hope that her boy should one day enter it. So do little ridges turn a rill, sending it on to become a mighty river, or diverting it to lose itself in a swamp. Had Elizabeth's experience of lawyers been unhappy, David might have ended his days behind a counter in Pwllheli, or in laborious struggles as an inefficient cobbler.

The problem was earnestly and prayerfully debated by Elizabeth and her brother. They had some small savings, dwindling now that their competent mother Rebecca was dead and no longer holding up the commercial side of the shoemaking business. They resolved to scrape them together to pay the premium for starting David in a solicitor's office.

Money, however, was not the only problem. The road to the law, they discovered, was by way of the Preliminary Law Examination. For this, Latin and French were compulsory. David knew neither. His schoolmaster knew some Latin, but there was no one in the village who could teach him French. No one? There was his uncle, Richard Lloyd. True, he knew no French either, but he got the books and set himself to learn in order that he might teach his nephew. The French grammar appeared on the shoemaker's bench, and the last was much neglected while the middle-aged craftsman struggled with the mysteries of French genders and declensions and the conjugation of the verb "*aller*". The life-story of Richard Lloyd is a tale of unselfish heroism; but there is surely something supremely moving about this picture of the saintly, bearded Welsh village shoemaker wrestling with French syntax in order to prepare his young nephew for the examination.

Nor was the task confined to French, for the Latin set for the examination was more advanced than the range of the village schoolmaster's knowledge, and Richard Lloyd ventured into this field as well to help David through the intricacies of Sallust's *Catiline*. They were both beginners, but they helped one another along, and in the intimacy of their joint study they reached new depths of mutual understanding and affection. Through the year 1877 they worked, and in December they set out together for Liverpool, where the law examination was being held. The older man's conscientious thoroughness and the youngster's

mental brilliance proved an irresistible combination, and when the results were published David's name figured in the list of successful candidates. Great was the joy in Llanystumdwy, and David Evans proudly recorded his prize pupil's achievement in the school log.

Now came the further problem of finding a solicitor's office willing to employ him. They were not plentiful in that remote rural area; nor would some of them have commended themselves to a man of Richard Lloyd's principles. But at length a really satisfactory opening was found in the firm of Breese, Jones and Casson of Portmadoc, solicitors of high standing in the district, for they were clerks to the justices of two petty sessional divisions and, better still, the head of the firm was Liberal agent for Merionethshire.

In July 1878 David went to live in Portmadoc, and started work as a clerk in the office. In the following January, when he was just 16, he was formally articled to the junior partner, Mr. Casson.

For the next five years the youth diligently served his apprenticeship to the law. He read tremendously. The kindly old dame in whose house he lodged at Portmadoc used to mark each morning with distress how much of his bedroom candle he had burned overnight. The poor boy could not be getting enough sleep, she said. Besides, she went in terror that he would fall asleep over his book and set his bedclothes alight. There was also the cost of candles to consider. Like most simple folk with little money, the North Welsh peasantry tend, for all their warm-hearted generosity, to be acutely parsimonious in the use of things that have to be bought.

Law books naturally took first place in David's reading, for he started out with the determination to make himself a thorough master of his craft. How fully he achieved this aim his brilliant successes in the local courts were later on to demonstrate. His uncle had carefully trained him in habits of diligence and application. He was a very swift reader, with an alert and concentrated mind that picked up instantly the substance of what he read, and a memory that stored it away and could recall it when wanted. As a boy he had greedily devoured the not inconsiderable hoard of serious and solid reading matter in the Llanystumdwy cottage. Here in Portmadoc there were fresh sources to tap, and in addition to his law studies he read widely and voraciously. Constitutional history, Shakespeare, biographies, translations of the classics, in fact a rich swathe of the best literature was mown by him in those long, quiet evenings after the office had closed. Novels came low in his list of preferences. His was the high seriousness of a youth in his late teens, athirst for knowledge, eager to understand the world about him, to seek out the hidden treasure of its wisdom and to fit himself for great achievement. Woe to the age in which young men have lost their seriousness!

Deeply as he read and studied the law, David gained a far more thorough practical experience of its ways in the course of his daily work. This brought him into the police-court as assistant to the justice's clerk, to quarter sessions, to the local authorities in connection with rating matters and issues of county administration. His firm quickly came to appreciate his alertness of mind, reliability and energy, and used him freely to watch cases for them in the courts, to serve papers, collect information, carry out canvassing. A country solicitor's office can be an excellent training-ground in the practical working of the law, and Lloyd George gained an intimate knowledge of rating problems, local government affairs and the petty tyrannies of some landlords, which he put to effective use later on in Westminster.

Politics, too, which he had so often and eagerly heard debated in his uncle's workshop and at the village forge, now came to fill a part of his working life and an increasing share of his leisure. Since Mr. Breese was a Liberal agent, young Lloyd George had to learn to carry out the registration of electors, and was also employed to do a good deal of canvassing. He enjoyed this, since it was on behalf of the Liberal cause, and he learned much about the art of political persuasion when trying out his arguments upon the farmer folk of Merioneth. He also found his way to a substitute for the Llanystumdwy forge—a candle-maker's works in Portmadoc where men were fond of gathering to discuss political problems.

Then in March 1880, the year after he was articled, came a general election, and he threw himself into it, heart and soul. His boyhood training had left him, of course, in no sort of doubt that the Liberals were on the side of the angels, while the Tories were in bondage to the powers of darkness. Portmadoc was a Liberal stronghold in the county of Caernarvon. Long familiar with the bitter taste of being one of a despised and inferior minority—in race, religion and politics—David now savoured the heady stimulant of triumph, of finding himself with the majority, with the popular and winning side; for amid scenes of jubilation the Liberal candidate, Watkin Williams, was returned for the county at the head of the poll.

The experience the youth had gained in political discussion, reinforced by the success of his side in the election, inspired him with a confidence that sent him adventuring into a new field that autumn—the field of political journalism. At the end of October 1880 he wrote a critical retort to a speech which the Marquess of Salisbury had recently made, and sent it to the *North Wales Express* above the *nom de plume* of "Brutus". To his delight, the paper printed the article on 5th November. Alike in its pugnacity and in its idealism, the article contained more than a hint of the characteristics which would mark the writer in his later career. The final paragraph declared:

"Toryism has not been barren of statesmen—real and not charlatan—statesmen who prized the honour of England above the interests of party—who really hated oppression and demonstrated their detestation of it, not by pleading immunity from condign punishment for the instigation of foul and atrocious crimes, but by the laudable assistance which they rendered in the name of England to weak nationalities in their desperate struggles for Liberty—for freedom from the yoke of inhuman despots—for very existence. By so much was the Canning of ancient Toryism superior, nobler than the Salisbury of modern Conservatism."

That very month a by-election occurred in Caernarvonshire and the Conservative candidate was the Llanystumdwy squire, Ellis Nanney. Certainly it was with no premonition of the contest he would wage with Nanney 10 years later that "Brutus" proceeded to pen a second letter to the paper, castigating the Tory nominee and concluding with the assertion, "You are just the man whom the electors of Caernarvonshire would delight to reject with contumely!"

This letter, too, was printed, and thenceforward "Brutus" was a not infrequent contributor to the *North Wales Express*. His articles were highly popular, and the news that another letter by "Brutus" was in the paper came to be an event to rouse lively interest among its readers.

These adolescent writings are worth study, alike for their matter and for their style. Inevitably they were immature, and here or there the awkward turn of a sentence or the pretentious use of big words hints the unpractised hand. But they show a quite remarkable range of vocabulary, an eager reaching out for the arresting phrase, a fluency and vigour of expression which was later to flower in oratory that would thrill and sway vast audiences in a manner that none of his contemporaries could rival. The matter of the "Brutus" articles is scathing political invective, somewhat reminiscent of the Letters of Junius, though enriched by a generous warmth of feeling not to be found in the sour philippics of the earlier writer. Junius might have paralleled the contemptuous dismissal of Ellis Nanney, but he would hardly have sounded with Brutus' sincerity a note of sympathy for the sufferings of Afghan mothers, slaughtered Zulus, and evicted Irish peasants.

The year 1880 was marked by another change for Lloyd George. His mother and his uncle Richard were lonely without their "Dai". True, he walked back to Llanystumdwy each Saturday to spend the week-end at home, but his departure on Monday morning left an empty place. Richard Lloyd was losing interest in his shoemaking as the work of his unpaid ministry engrossed him more and more. Most of his flock and of his friends were at Criccieth. So he decided to close down his business and

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move to Criccieth, where David could share his home again. True, Criccieth was still some five miles from Portmadoc, but David was all his life a great walker, and the distance would be no hardship for him. A Criccieth ironmonger, G. P. Williams, one of the elders of the Baptist Church, bought Morvin House, a little dwelling on the slope of the hill crowned by the ruins of Criccieth Castle, as a home for his pastor, and here Richard Lloyd settled with Elizabeth and her family.

His return to the family circle influenced David in several ways. He was able to help on young William George as an elder brother should, in the studies he had himself so recently mastered, with a view to the lad following his own course into the law. Closer intercourse with his saintly uncle helped to steady his mind, which was entering that turbid age of doubt and uncertainty in which a youth loses his assured confidence in inherited beliefs, and reaches out to form his own. In Lloyd George's case that process was aided by a somewhat unlikely religious mentor, Thomas Carlyle, whose *Sartor Resartus* guided the youth to a renewed foothold on the "Everlasting Yea".

Probably an even greater steadying influence, if a less philosophical one, was the fact that, living at Criccieth, he was drawn to take an active part in the work of the little Baptist Church where his uncle ministered: in Sunday School and Bible Class and Temperance Society. This last was a lively and growing movement. At that time, and right on into the early years of the twentieth century, excessive drinking was a very grave national evil. Much of the scanty earnings of the underfed poor, who were crowded into crumbling hovels and city slums, went to purchase a cheap oblivion through intoxicating liquor. Drunkenness was appallingly common. It was a regular practice—almost a point of honour—for working men to get drunk on a Saturday night. Gradually the public conscience revolted at this spectacle, and in the latter part of the nineteenth century the blue ribbon movement spread rapidly. It became specially strong among the Nonconformist churches, with their Puritan atmosphere and their broad basis in the more actively religious members of the middle and lower classes—people whose practical experience of alcoholic excess among their neighbours was of its most beastly, degrading and destructive aspects.

Richard Lloyd's household was teetotal, and David, trained in his uncle's principles, became a zealous temperance advocate. His early efforts at public speaking were mostly on the temperance platform—a layman's platform for which no special unction or heavenly call need be postulated. He became a friend of "Plenydd", the regional secretary of the United Kingdom Alliance, who began to take him round to speak at temperance meetings. At these little village gatherings his oratorical talents got their first polish.

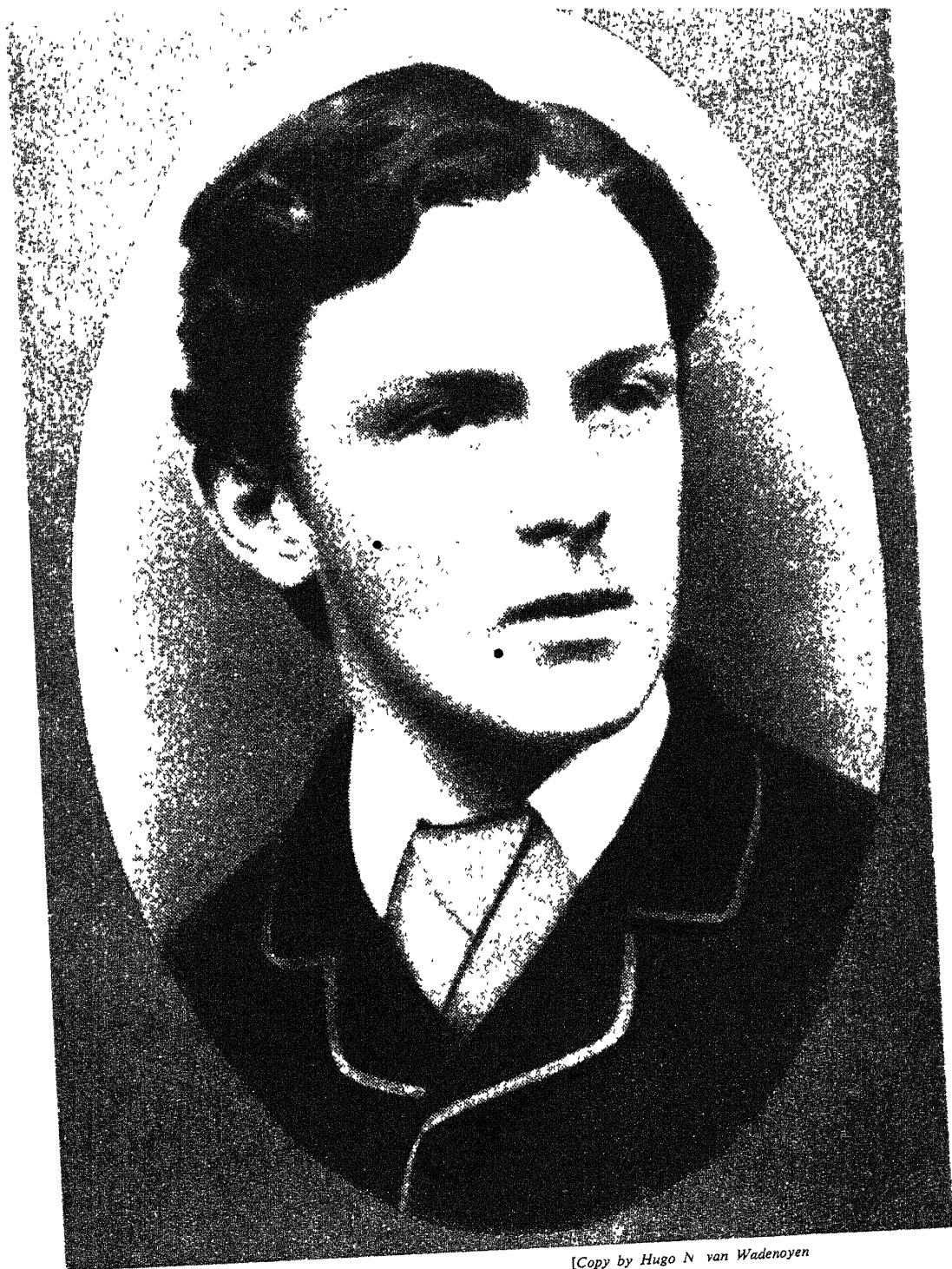
Although a born preacher, Lloyd George was rather diffident of the pulpit. His mind was far too alert and critical for him to feel—as he later put it—a smug satisfaction about his own sanctity that would warrant him in delivering homilies to his neighbours. In the little chapel of Pen-y-Maes his early contributions were chiefly the reading of the scriptures and leading the singing. Yet it was perhaps inevitable that as he gained confidence in public speaking he should consent to take an occasional preaching engagement. The first event of this kind happened when he was 18 years old.

The setting was a little Baptist chapel at Penmachno, a Denbighshire village in a mountain valley some 25 miles from Criccieth. Many years earlier some Baptist evangelists had penetrated the valley and started a small community, which met in the house of one of its members till it grew large enough to want a meeting-house. No land for the purpose was to be had in the village. The squire did not sympathize with dissent. But at length a friendly farmer half a mile away up the hillside offered a site, and a tiny building was erected by the faithful, with stone quarried on the spot. Here they met for prayer and worship, and in the narrow plot beside the chapel they buried their dead. It was one of the many such little Bethels that in villages and back streets witnessed to the self-sacrificing devotion of humble folk to the faith by which they held.

It is still remembered that Lloyd George, in the spring of 1881, tramped the mountain road through Portmadoc and Festiniog to Penmachno, accompanied by a deacon from the Portmadoc Baptist Church. They were put up for the Saturday night by a farmer on the opposite side of the valley, and on the Sabbath the young man took the services and preached in the little chapel. Of the theme of his discourse no record appears to have survived, though there exist notes of some of his subsequent sermons. On the Monday morning he was up before dawn to tramp back to Portmadoc, 20 miles away, for the day's work.

The Penmachno chapel is today a ruin. The faithful handful dwindled slowly away, for their young people did not stay in the village. Presently there were left only four old dames, who continued to meet for prayer and reading of the scriptures. One by one these passed to their rest and the little building stood empty. Winter storms tore off its slates, and the timbers were filched away for other uses. Now only the walls are standing, and flowering weeds fill the roofless enclosure, while brambles hide the gravestones of the little God's-acre alongside. What matter? It served in its day the needs of those who sought to worship freely as their conscience bade them. And down below in the village the people still treasure the memory that Lloyd George, their national hero, preached his first sermon within those walls.

It seems to have been more than a twelvemonth later when he



*[Copy by Hugo N van Wadenoyen]*

David Lloyd George as a youth of seventeen



The President of  
the Board of  
Trade, 1906

ventured on speaking in his home church. In July 1882 his uncle Richard noted in his diary:

"Excellent meeting; D.L.G. speaking for the first time. O, my own dear boy spoke well! Never more striking and effective. . . . Thy protection over him, O Lord! Long life and strength with Thy blessing. Make goodness a reality in his life, through Christ. Have never felt so moved. Note Judges, 12th Chapter." (? theme of sermon?)

Temperance addresses and these occasional religious discourses were the channels for oratorical effort into which he tended to be turned by home influences and the example of his uncle. But his own interest was rapidly growing in political matters. In November 1881 he paid his first visit to London, for the purpose of sitting for his Intermediate Law Examination, and was irresistibly drawn to the Houses of Parliament. He was not greatly impressed by the appearance of the Chamber where he was destined in after years to play so memorable a part, but the way in which his ambition was pulling him was shown clearly by a note he made in his diary:

"I will not say but that I eyed the assembly in a spirit similar to that in which William the Conqueror eyed England on his visit to Edward the Confessor, as the region of his future domain. Oh vanity!"

Time has turned that note from vanity into history. But history does not just happen. It is made by human will and effort. Lloyd George started with great natural gifts, but one of the greatest of them was his capacity for hard work. That was a talent which he used from the first. His uncle, writing in his diary of this visit to London, could say:

"He has worked with industry and diligence throughout. It will be an unfortunate accident if he does not get through with honours, and even if this happens, there is no fear that he has not been well grounded."

He got through, needless to say. A certain Puckish strain in his character, which he never lost, caused him to return by an unexpected route, and turn up at home, giving a strange name and asking to see Mr. Lloyd. There was some anxious waiting for news of the result. Then two telegrams came, one for David and one for his uncle—each having made surreptitious arrangements without the other's knowledge—to report his success. His uncle made a characteristic note in his diary:

"More convinced than ever that our scheme is best: a thorough study of the whole, every book, chapter and notes of text and foot-notes. Would rather be plucked after so doing than have a superficial cramming preparation under a coach to pass easily." (25 Novr., 1881.)

No, Uncle Richard did not believe in slipshod work, and he trained David in his own habits of infinite pains.

With the Intermediate examination safely behind him, Lloyd George at once joined the Portmadoc Debating Society. He was elected on 28th November, 1881, and was soon taking a leading part in its discussions, the themes of which were habitually political. He worked hard at his speeches, reading up matter for them, thinking out points and phrases, practising delivery. The Welsh are traditionally eloquent, and have produced a large number of able preachers and orators. Lloyd George became in due time the prince of them all. But he never rested lazily upon his remarkable natural gifts. From the first he took infinite pains to polish up his talent till it glittered. He was careful to make himself master in advance of the subject to be discussed; to plan effective arguments and arresting phrases. He would use the five-mile stretch of lonely country road, which he had to tramp from Criccieth on his way to the Debating Society in the evening, to try out his voice and his memory in the utterance of the speech which he purposed to make.

His contributions to the discussions were not long in attracting attention. The very first occasion when his name was mentioned in a newspaper occurred in connection with this society when he had been a member for scarcely more than two months. The *North Wales Express* of 3rd February, 1882, reported a discussion at the fortnightly meeting of the Portmadoc Debating Society on 30th January on the question: "Should Irish landlords be compensated on account of the working of the Land Act?" After the opening speeches, the paper reports that the opposer

"was followed by Mr. T. Lloyd, Mr. Holl, and Mr. Lloyd George, whose argumentative and nervous speech shook the very foundations of the Irish landlords' claims to compensation."

In the following autumn, when the youth had not yet completed his first year of membership, the same paper singled him out again for special mention in its report of a debate on the British action in Egypt against Arabi Pasha. After briefly summarizing the speech of Mr. Evan Williams in favour of Sir Garnet Wolseley's expedition, and of Mr. Thomas Lloyd opposing it, the report said:

"The speeches which followed, especially the speech of Mr. Lloyd George, were very good.

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"Mr. George, in a most eloquent harangue, full of clenching arguments, denounced the war as a very wicked one. He showed that the Suez Canal was in no danger at the hands of Arabi, and that the Khedive, Tewfik Pasha, was as guilty of revolt as Arabi Pasha was, because the latter was not dismissed by him till he saw that the army had gone over to Arabi. The foreign control was a great injustice to the Egyptians. The peasants of the country were being driven to the greatest poverty by the shameful taxation imposed by the rotten government of the country upon them. They were glad to get any man to come and deliver them from their pitiful state. Arabi Pasha was a man who had risen from amongst them—a man who knew all about their wants, because he had felt those wants himself."

These two first reported speeches of Lloyd George are remarkably in keeping with his subsequent political attitude. They show him as antagonistic to landlords, eager to defend oppressed peasants, and bitterly opposed to what he regarded as injustice to a small country by a powerful one. One might be excused for supposing that his hostility to the war with Arabi was an early example of the pacifism which later on was quite erroneously supposed to be a part of Lloyd George's political attitude. But curiously enough, it happens that he was at the time a member of the Volunteers, and that very summer had spent some time with them in camp at Conway. His membership of the armed forces of the Realm is an episode in his career about which little else appears to be known. But the truth is that neither then nor at any other time was Lloyd George at heart a pacifist. Far from it! He was a highly pugnacious member of a traditionally warlike race. With the memory of the long Welsh struggle against its big and overbearing Saxon neighbour he hated the making of wars of aggression and plunder, the oppression of a weak nation by one more powerful. Later, when he grew absorbed in the struggle for social reform, he grudged expenditure on armaments which ate up money for which he could have found a beneficent use. But the volunteer of Conway camp had no qualms about taking up arms in defence of his country, or to oppose injustice and wrong. Fighting, indeed, was instinctive with him, and all through his life he plunged joyously into the fray; and he never pulled his punches!

His growing interest in political discussion did not in any way detract from Lloyd George's successful progress in the study and practice of the law. By 1884 he was fully ready to take his final examination and qualify as a solicitor. His uncle's diary shows that a difficult problem now arose for them. The first opportunity to sit for the examination would occur in mid-January, and in great perturbation Richard Lloyd wrote:

"David accidentally heard yesterday that he must be twenty-one years of age before he can sit. He will have his twenty-first birthday on the last day of his examination. What can we do? Nothing must be done except what is right. If others do, let them do, but not we. Mr. Casson is sending to the authorities to find out and get a judge's order if that is the best course. For my part I think it would be better to postpone the examination until April."

The entry displays in very characteristic fashion the uncompromising rectitude of the older man. So far as David's preparedness was concerned, no delay was needed, and when at length he went up to London in April and sat the examination, he passed with honours.

Of course he visited the House of Commons during his stay in town, and heartily enjoyed, while politically disapproving, a clever baiting of Gladstone by Lord Randolph Churchill. He also went with a friend, out of curiosity, to a phrenologist at Ludgate Circus to have his bumps read.

The phrenologist amazed him by the accuracy of his character delineation, but went far to ruin the impression created by his diagnosis when he ended up with the prophecy that Lloyd George would one day be Prime Minister! That was a good joke, thought the youth from a remote Welsh town, where he looked forward to a career as a country solicitor; a youth with neither wealth, university training, social connections nor any other of the qualifications which at that date were still the *sine qua non* for high political office. Still, the other less extravagant statements that the phrenologist had made were surprisingly close to the mark, and thereafter Lloyd George always felt that there was a good deal in the science, and used to relate his estimates of the characters of his colleagues to peculiarities in the shape of their heads.

Another visit to London followed soon afterwards, when David Lloyd George was formally sworn in and his name placed on the roll of solicitors. The ceremony disappointed him. It struck him as humdrum and rather slovenly. "Some fellow of a clerk," he wrote home, "swore us to a lawyerly demeanour at the back of the Court, and off we shambled to the Petty Bag Office to sign the Rolls!" It was, of course, a very ordinary affair for the officiating clerk, though for the young man it meant the culmination of a boyhood's dream and of long years of grinding struggle and application. Lloyd George was an exceptionally clever boy, and his uncle had proved an exceptionally devoted and helpful mentor. None the less, the road up from a village elementary school to the roll of solicitors had been a stiff climb.

Mr. Breese, the head of the Portmadoc firm of solicitors where David had served his articles, had died three years earlier, in 1881. His death had

been a bitter grief to the youth, as was shown by the entry in Richard Lloyd's diary:

"Poor David, no wonder he wept so copiously! He had become very attached to Mr. Breese, who had shown him exceptional kindness since he came under his wing."

But one result was that there was now room for another solicitor in the firm, and David was offered a post as its representative at Criccieth.

The firm had a high reputation, and the prospects it could offer to so capable a young man were good. David, however, had come to dislike strongly the principal partner, Mr. Casson, whom he considered to be mean and overbearing. As an alternative, the surviving partners secured him the offer of a managing clerkship in an old-established firm at Dolgelly. But L.G. was not attracted by a safe competence. He decided on a riskier course, and at the end of the year he set up his own independent establishment.

It was a daring choice. He had no capital, and by now there was little left of his uncle's savings. He managed to pay for a brass plate with his name, "David Lloyd George, Solicitor", to stick on the door of their Criccieth home. But until he had collected his first fees for work in the police-courts he could not afford the gown and bands indispensable to a solicitor when appearing in the County Court. He managed, however, to get them on credit from a Criccieth shop where he was well known.

He was diligent in attendance at the local courts, and began to pick up cases to defend. He generally won them, sometimes maybe on an obscure point of law. Not for nothing had he made himself a master of the law in relation to the numerous minor problems and disputes that were constantly arising in the countryside—questions of assault, of trespass, poaching, right of way, licences, registration, tenancies, and all the other myriad issues upon which people have occasion to seek legal advice and aid. The note-books in which he jotted down short records of his activities at that time show that he swiftly became known as an able advocate in difficult cases. Before he had been six months in independent practice he could note, on 24th June, 1885, that he had over 30 cases that day on his list at the Portmadoc County Court, and won them all. A steady trickle of clients began to flow to the little house under Criccieth Castle, to this clever young lawyer who was so successful in the courts. The legal advice and aid they got was always sound. For all his skill in advocacy, Lloyd George constantly advised his clients to carry matters through without recourse to the courts if it was possible. But where an issue had to be fought in court, he usually won it. So the trickle grew to a stream.

He was not content with a Criccieth practice. Before the year was out

he had opened an office in Portmadoc. In the following year he engaged a room at Pwllheli—in the Temperance Hotel—where he attended on specified days to do work for clients there. He also opened a branch office at Festiniog, among the slate quarries, for he took a special delight in defending poachers against landlords, and the quarrymen were inveterate poachers. Thus he proceeded to build up a far-flung practice, and his days were very full—dashing about from Criccieth to Portmadoc, on to Festiniog or back to Pwllheli; consulting with clients, taking cases in police or County Courts, and filling in his evenings with political activities and temperance speeches. His younger brother, William, was now following him in the study of the law, and assisting him as his clerk. He had a busy time keeping up with his restless and untiring elder brother!

As a lawyer, Lloyd George conceived it to be his duty to secure justice for the common people as against those whom he had grown up to regard as their oppressors—the landowners and propertied classes. Hence his delight in defending poachers. Hence, too, another interest which at this time he developed—the cause of the small tenant farmers.

Farmers' Unions were springing up in England, and the movement had spread to Wales. Here the farmers were small peasants, occupying little family holdings that rarely exceeded 50 acres. The Agricultural Holdings Act of 1906 was still 20 years away, and these yeomen were very much at the mercy of their landlords. Lloyd George resolved to do his best to get them to combine for their own defence. He moved about among them, urging them to form a Farmers' Union, and eventually a meeting was held at Pwllheli where a group of them decided, after a speech from him, to join in such a Union. The fact that a lawyer was on their side—a lawyer with a growing reputation for skill in defending people who were threatened with oppressive treatment—played no little part in the decision. The growth of the Farmers' Unions of North Wales was in very large measure the work of Lloyd George. It was his first big stroke in that battle for the revival of the countryside which throughout his life remained his dominant passion.

## CHAPTER IV

### FROM LAW COURT TO PARLIAMENT

THE Liberal Party to which Lloyd George had from his infancy given his allegiance—having been trained thereto by his Uncle Richard—was during the eighteen-eighties entering on a period of dissension and adversity.

The Party was a composite blend of several strains. It had come into existence in 1830, during the agitation for the Reform Bill, as a coalition of Whigs and Radicals. The Whigs were a party of great nobles with considerable landed estates, who from the latter part of the seventeenth century had pursued a policy of resisting any attempt at autocratic rule by the Crown, and of maintaining and extending their own liberties and privileges. They were spiritual descendants of the barons who wrested Magna Carta from King John, and, like them, they half-unawares promoted the individual liberty of all their fellow-citizens while concerned about their own. They were allied with the merchant princes of the City, who shared their opposition to encroachments by the Crown on the freedom or pocket of the subject. One effect of this alliance was to make the Whigs favour Colonial expansion and world trade, in contrast with their political opponents, the Tory squires and parsons, whose interests were mainly parochial and domestic.

The Radicals were the product of the new political ideas set in motion by the French Revolution, and by the philosophy of Rousseau which had stimulated that movement. They were reformers who wanted a drastic clean-up and reconstruction of the social and political order. Their ranks were swelled by recruits from among the new host of merchants and manufacturers produced by the Industrial Revolution: men who wished for the minimum of State interference and had scant respect for feudal privileges and old, traditional ways and the sanctity of things as they are. It was largely the pressure of these Radical allies of the Whig aristocrats that swung them into advocacy of the Reform Bill.

In the eighteen-forties this Whig-Radical coalition was reinforced through the adhesion of the Peelites—the progressive-minded Conservatives who supported Sir Robert Peel in his decision to repeal the Corn Laws. One of these, an able young statesman who had earlier been singled out by Macaulay as “the rising hope of the stern, unbending Tories”, was William Ewart Gladstone.

The Liberal Party was thus a remarkable compost of varied elements: of wealthy, aristocratic Whig families, of merchants and manufacturers,

of leading economists such as John Stuart Mill, of bankers and brewers and Radical reformers. They shared a common faith in individual liberty and opposed all forms of tyranny. In Palmerston's day that faith took the form of claiming the fullest liberty for a Briton anywhere in the world. Later, under Gladstone, Liberal foreign policy grew more concerned to encourage nations struggling for freedom and to oppose tyranny and oppression. At home, the Liberal Party maintained freedom of trade and of private enterprise, and successively abolished such restrictions and disabilities as still rested on Nonconformists, Catholics and Jews. It removed the taxes on newspapers and books, disestablished the Irish Church, provided elementary education for all, legalized Trade Unions, and introduced the secret ballot. It was the most characteristic feature of mid-Victorian Britain, and was the majority party in Parliament for thirty of the forty years that followed the repeal of the Corn Laws.

By the eighteen-eighties its dominion was crumbling. Gladstone was still a figure of almost legendary authority. Joseph Chamberlain, the Birmingham Radical, whose republican views made him anathema to Queen Victoria, was his chief henchman. But while Joseph was urging progressive reforms, Gladstone's main domestic interest was financial economy, and his enthusiasm was given rather to policies for improving conditions in Ireland, in Affica, in Turkey and the Balkans. His whirlwind Midlothian Campaign in November 1879, which swept the Liberals back to power in the 1880 election, dealt chiefly with the Macedonian atrocities of the "unspeakable Turk". Yet it was external affairs that brought him and his party to disaster. His new administration soon found itself landed in trouble abroad: trouble first in South Africa, where, after the British defeat at Majuba in 1881, Gladstone at the Queen's insistence conceded independence to the Boers of the Transvaal; and hard on its heels great trouble in Ireland, where the Phoenix Park murders of Lord Frederick Cavendish and Mr. Burke by the Fenians in 1882 stung him into adopting a stern policy of coercion which roused the uneasiness of the Liberals and the taunts of the Tories, and was bitterly opposed in Parliament by Parnell and his following of sixty Irish Home Rulers. Finally there was trouble in Egypt, where General Gordon, sent to withdraw the British troops from the Soudan in face of the Mahdi's insurrection there, refused to retire and became beleaguered in Khartoum, where, after holding out for a year, he was finally overpowered and killed in January 1885, just before a relieving force under Lord Wolseley arrived.

The concern with external affairs into which Gladstone directed Liberal thought no doubt explains why the earliest writings of "Brutus" and the first speeches of Lloyd George in the Portmadoc Debating Society dealt mainly with matters of foreign politics. But when as a

young solicitor he began to take an active part in political controversy, his keenest interest proved to be in more domestic problems—Temperance, Leasehold Enfranchisement, Disestablishment of the Welsh Church, Free Trade and kindred matters. His hero at this time was not Gladstone, but Joseph Chamberlain. He had a natural affinity for the Birmingham Radical. He liked Chamberlain's forceful, pungent oratory, admired his successful organization of the Liberal Party, and warmly sympathized with his efforts to impose on it a programme of active social reform—a programme with which the Whig elements of the Party had scant sympathy. In one of Lloyd George's newspaper articles, printed by the *North Wales Observer* on 17th October, 1884, he wrote:

“Mr. Chamberlain is unquestioningly the future leader of the people. . . . He understands the sympathies of his countrymen. It is therefore that he speaks intelligibly and straightforwardly, like a man who is proud of the opinions which he holds. He is a Radical, and doesn't care who knows it as long as the people do.”

In the General Election held in November 1885, Lloyd George was very active addressing meetings on behalf of the Liberal candidate, and was highly flattered when a local minister declared after hearing one of his speeches that he “would make another Chamberlain!” His note-books record that at one of these meetings he devoted himself to answering the Tory attacks on Chamberlain, “pointing out that every Tory mushroom thought he ought to attack Chamberlain”. But he was disappointed in Gladstone's election programme, which struck him as devoid of constructive quality and popular appeal. “Humdrum Liberalism won't win elections!” he noted; and he attributed any Liberal successes to Chamberlain's speeches.

The election was the outcome of Gladstone's defeat on his budget in June 1885, after which he resigned and a minority Tory administration took office and appealed to the country. The election was the first after Gladstone's Franchise Act of 1884, giving the vote to farm workers. In consequence, no doubt, the Liberals did fairly well in county constituencies, but lost heavily in the towns. They were returned with a majority of 86 over the Tories, but the Irish Home Rule Party, which came back 86 strong, held the balance of power. Sore and angry at Gladstone's Crimes Act of 1882 and his coercion policy in Ireland, they at first supported the Tory administration.

Gladstone had not publicly defined his attitude to Home Rule during the election, though there is abundant evidence that his mind had for some time been turning in favour of it. But before the new parliament met he announced his readiness to support a measure of Home Rule.

The action took his Party by surprise, and split it in two, for a large and influential section of it was strongly opposed to tampering with the Union. This section included not only a number of leading Whig noblemen, headed by Lord Hartington (afterwards the Duke of Devonshire), but Bright, Goschen and Joseph Chamberlain. They hived off as a new political group, calling themselves Liberal Unionists, and in course of time coalesced with the Conservatives.

The split had a profound and permanent effect on the Liberal Party. For the next twenty years the Liberals were weakened, divided, and politically impotent. But more important, they lost the bulk of the aristocratic support they had formerly enjoyed. At one time the Whigs had included in their ranks the cream of high society, the wealthiest and most powerful noble families. Compared with them, the Tories were a socially inferior party, representing chiefly the rustic gentry of the countryside. Whig alliance with the Radicals had started a slow drift across towards Toryism among the Whig nobility, but the Home Rule split carried over a large body of them at one blow. Liberalism was driven to seek new supporters among the freshly enfranchised masses, and to devise policies and programmes that would gain their good will. If it had lost its social prestige, it had lost, too, the weight of upper-class membership which would have been out of sympathy with such programmes, and became free to link itself with the political stirrings of the working classes. It welcomed and nursed the early growth of the Labour Party in the opening years of the twentieth century. A couple of decades later that lively foster-child thrust its Liberal guardian into the background. But there had been in the interval a stage in the Liberal Party's development when, lightened of its Whig elements and reinforced by the growing strength of the Left wing, it was an instrument that Lloyd George could wield to carve out the great social reforms enacted between 1906 and 1914. Had the Liberal Unionist split not occurred, such a programme might well have been impossible.

For Lloyd George himself, the 1886 crisis was also a personal crisis. His strong sympathy with Chamberlain might well have drawn him to follow his hero into the Unionist ranks, and at first he hesitated as to his course. But a sound instinct warned him that the goods he carried in his knapsack—Welsh Disestablishment, Local Option, Leasehold Reform and a Radical social policy—would not be highly esteemed among the Tories and Right-wing Whigs with whom Joseph Chamberlain had chosen to ally himself. His Uncle Richard emphatically shared this opinion. It was beyond question the wise conclusion for him. As a Liberal Unionist he would have become utterly frustrate, a cuckoo in the Tory nest, at war with his party and with himself.

So he remained a Gladstonian Liberal. He had no great enthusiasm

for Irish Home Rule, though he recognized the case for it. But to evangelical Nonconformity it was distasteful as holding a threat of Rome Rule, which a generation nurtured on Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* held in deep abhorrence. To Lloyd George, however, a study of Gladstone's new policy brought an inspiration. If the Irish were entitled to Home Rule, why should there not be Home Rule All Round, and in particular, Home Rule for Wales?

The conception kindled a fire in him for which his Llanystumdwy upbringing, with its traditions of Welsh culture and its defiant pride in Welsh nationality, had stored up abundant fuel. He proceeded to translate his Liberalism into Welsh Nationalism, a policy which had already been winning supporters for some years in South Wales. Apart from Gladstone's sudden adoption of Irish Home Rule, official Liberalism was just then running dry of ideas. "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform" could arouse little enthusiasm when there was no threat of major war, and retrenchment ruled out any reforms that might involve expense. But Home Rule for Wales held a promise of all kinds of exciting developments. If the Welsh got a free hand to manage their own domestic affairs, they could set about realizing all those projects of which he dreamed—Welsh Disestablishment, Land Reform, Local Option, Educational Progress. He started to plan out and preach a federal system for the United Kingdom with local self-government for its four component countries, England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, with special emphasis on Wales.

This new notion made him look with warmer sympathy, despite his Nonconformist upbringing, upon the claims of the Irish Nationalists, and quickened his frank admiration for their skilful tactics in pursuing their ends. The outcome of this sympathy was an incident which profoundly influenced his career.

In February 1886 the veteran Home Ruler, Michael Davitt, visited North Wales in the course of a lecturing tour on behalf of the Irish Nationalists. Son of an evicted Irish peasant, Michael had in his time spent some years in prison as a Fenian, and when elected as Nationalist M.P. for West Meath in 1882 was released on ticket-of-leave but not allowed as an ex-convict to sit in Parliament. The leading Liberals of North Wales looked askance at this dubious figure and would not associate themselves with his campaign; but the quarrymen of Blacnau Festiniog invited him to address a meeting there, in support of a Land League for Wales. None of the chief figures in local Liberalism would consent to come to the meeting and move a vote of thanks to the speaker, but the rising young solicitor from Criccieth, who was on friendly terms with the quarrymen, agreed against the advice of his friends to undertake this task.

The meeting was held on 12th February, 1886, with a local minister,

the Rev. Michael Jones, in the chair. Lloyd George, speaking in Welsh, moved a vote of thanks to Davitt, and it is worth while to quote the report of his speech given by the *Cambrian News* as an example alike of the vivid, homely and picturesque oratory of which he was already a master, and of his ingrained antagonism to the Welsh Tory landlord class:

"Mr. D. Lloyd George, solicitor, said that when he saw the two Michaels on the platform it reminded him of the fight that the Archangel Michael had with Satan. (Laughter.) Though that Michael, being single-handed, was unable to dispose of Old Nick, he trusted that the two Michaels would be able to bring the cause of the farmers and the working man to a successful issue. (Cheers.) Mr. Michael Davitt was a man who had not only done much for humanity, but had also suffered much for humanity, and therefore they all honoured him. (Applause.) To oppose a man because he did not belong to their nation was most narrow-minded and contrary to the principles of their religion. They remembered the parable of the man who fell among thieves. His neighbour was not the man who belonged to his own nation, but a stranger from Samaria—not the priest and the Levite. (Laughter.) The farmers of Wales had fallen among thieves but the Welsh priests were a great deal worse than the priest referred to in the parable. The priest in the parable merely passed by without taking notice of the man, but the Welsh priests had joined the robbers. (Loud laughter and cheers.) Mr. Michael Davitt was the stranger from Samaria—an Irishman—who had come there to bind up their wounds. (Cheers.) Let them respect him on that account. (Applause.) The people who spoke against bringing Mr. Michael Davitt into Wales were those who on bended knees begged princes who were no better than German half-breeds to come into Wales to preside over Eisteddfodau. (Laughter and cheers.) Why, then, object to the introduction of a true philanthropist, a man who had done much for his fellow-men? (Cheers.)

"There was a need for that movement. There was the greatest misery existing in the country. Working men were starving. The aristocracy were squandering money earned by the sweat of the working-man's brow. Whilst working men were starving the aristocracy were feeding their game with food that ought to go to the people—"The bread of the children is given to the dogs!" (Loud applause.) The people only wanted union. They had now the power; but it was astonishing how in an election they would vote against their own interest. They would even vote for a landlord who would go to Parliament to betray their interests. (Loud applause and a voice:

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‘Morgan Lloyd’.) They would even vote for Tories without the slightest hesitation—not that they believed in Toryism or liked their own slavery. A philosopher had said that the way to make a man happy was by whipping him until he felt he was happy. (Laughter.) The Tory working men did not exactly believe in that, but they voted for the Tories because they wanted something from the Tories—to rent a piece of land which the Tories possessed, or were afraid of being turned out of their holdings which were the property of the Tories. (Cheers.) Let working men unite, and then all the forces of the enemy could not overcome the stern sons of Eryri. (Applause.) If they made a wall of sand it was one of the strongest means of resisting attack. What was the reason? A handful of sand could be blown away by a puff of wind; but particles of sand combined in an earthwork were a means of resisting the enemy’s fire. Working men, acting separately, were only as particles of sand to resist the power of the landlord; but let workmen combine, firmly express their opinions, and then no opposition, however powerful, would be able to stand before them. (Applause.) When a Land League was started for Wales, he hoped they would all join it. (Prolonged applause.)”

The speech was extensively reported in both the Welsh and the English Press of North Wales, and created a great impression on the local public. But perhaps more important was the impression it created in Michael Davitt, who was so struck by Lloyd George’s oratorical power that he urged him most strongly to go into Parliament. His advice was reinforced by the chairman of the meeting, the Rev. Michael Jones, who from that time used his considerable local influence to push the cause of the young solicitor as a Liberal candidate. From this meeting dates the definite purpose of Lloyd George to enter Parliament. Earlier, it had been a youthful dream. Now it became a clear resolve.

He redoubled his interest in the Liberal activities of the district. A few weeks after the Blaenau Festiniog meeting he attended a Welsh National Conference at the same place, where he met for the first time Tom Ellis, then the rising hope of the Welsh Nationalists, and the two struck up a friendship which persisted and deepened until Tom’s untimely death, thirteen years later.

Some of Lloyd George’s zealous admirers wanted to put his name forward as Liberal candidate for Merionethshire, but Tom Ellis was already being proposed for the seat, and Lloyd George wisely refused to compete against him. Instead, he became his active supporter in the campaign which followed soon afterwards for the General Election of July 1886. It was a disastrous election for the Liberal Party, which had now split on the Home Rule issue, and the Tories and Liberal Unionists

were returned with a joint majority of 116 over the Gladstonian Liberals and Irish Nationalists. The Caernarvon Boroughs returned a Tory member. Tom Ellis, however, got in for Merionethshire, aided thereto in no small degree by his popular new friend, the young Criccieth solicitor.

His friendship with Tom Ellis brought Lloyd George into the centre of the new Young Wales movement, "Cymru Fydd" ("Wales of the Future" or "Wales for Ever"). This organization was the offspring of the Welsh Nationalist revival that had started in Merthyr Tydfil in 1868 and spread steadily northwards. Tom Ellis was the leading figure in Cymru Fydd, through which he sought to unite the whole Principality in a Welsh Nationalist League. From 1886 onward, that ideal also dominated Lloyd George's political speeches and writings.

In the course of that year another movement spread to Caernarvonshire, which drew the enthusiastic support of the village-bred young lawyer. This was the Anti-Tithe League.

Tithe, originally a voluntary contribution by the faithful of one-tenth of the produce of their soil, had long since been turned into a compulsory levy on agricultural land for the maintenance of the Established Church. In 1836 the levy of tithe in kind had been changed into a cash payment of a tithe rent charge, assessed on each holding in accordance with its normal productivity, and valued from year to year on the basis of the average price of cereals during the previous seven years. It had to be paid by the farmers occupying the holdings. In Wales, these were mostly small tenant farmers, nearly all of whom were Nonconformists. In the eighteen-eighties Thomas Gee, the influential editor of the *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, began a violent agitation against the tithe, and with the aid of John Parry of Llanarmon set to work to organize the Anti-Tithe League in North Wales.

The newly formed Farmers' Union of Caernarvonshire, in the creation of which Lloyd George had just played an active part, threw itself vigorously into this Tithe War, and Lloyd George himself travelled up and down the countryside, speaking with fiery eloquence against the tithe system. For a time, indeed, he became the Secretary of the League in South Caernarvonshire. Many of the meetings he addressed were held in the open air, as often as not just outside the parish church or the vicarage. This led not infrequently to verbal combats with vicar or curate, in which the quick-thinking young lawyer scored heavily, and polished his growing skill in platform dialectics and repartee. These combats won great local fame.

The farmers' resistance took the form of a refusal to pay the tithe, and distrains followed upon their stock and farm equipment. In some Welsh counties, where the military were called out to support the civil authorities in carrying out the distrains, the result was scenes of violence and blood-

shed. But in South Caernarvonshire, though the farmers played their full part in the agitation, their campaign was marred by no such unhappy incidents. His active and skilful leadership of the movement, however, made Lloyd George a familiar figure throughout the county, and a prime favourite with the Nonconformist farmers whose cause he championed so ably.

He had always been on terms of warm and understanding friendship with these small peasant farmers. Fortune now linked him with them still more closely. As far back as 28th November, 1885, his note-book had recorded that after an election meeting he "took M.O. and her cousin home". Soon another entry named her as "Maggie Owen". Then he gradually became a frequent visitor to her father, Richard Owen of Mynydd Ednyfed, a yeoman farmer who claimed descent from Owen Glendower. Mynydd Ednyfed, about a mile from Criccieth, was a large farm for those parts, covering a hundred acres, and Richard Owen was a man of influence among the farmers of the district. It seemed natural enough to him at first that the young lawyer who was working so hard for the farmers' interests should come to discuss them at Mynydd Ednyfed, but queer that he should prefer to discuss them with Maggie than with her father! When it grew plain to him that something warmer than politics was bringing the young man about the place he grew less cordial. The clannishness of the Welsh roots very deep, and being a farmer and the descendant of farmers, he hoped for a sturdy and competent farmer to wed his pretty daughter. His wife obediently supported him and there were tears at Ednyfed, for Maggie Owen had lost her heart to the eager, vital, strikingly handsome wooer. She found encouragement from other relatives who had formed a high opinion of David's prospects. "Don't you give him up!" advised one of her aunts. "That young fellow has a great future before him!"

She did not give him up. And as the months wore on it became clearer that her aunt's judgment was sound, for Lloyd George's reputation and his practice were growing swiftly. His success gradually melted away Richard Owen's objections, and he gave his consent to the match.

They were married on 24th January, 1888, a few days after Lloyd George's twenty-fifth birthday. Like so much else in his career, his wedding was at once rustic, original and noteworthy. The Owens were Methodists, and the marriage was celebrated in the remote little Methodist chapel of Pen-cae-newydd, a morsel of a village in the heart of the Llyn Peninsula. David and his Uncle Richard spent the preceding night at Chwilog, a village about five miles west of Criccieth, and in the morning walked the further three miles to the chapel at Pen-cae-newydd, where the Rev. John Owen, Methodist minister of Criccieth, and David's uncle, Richard Lloyd, conducted between them the marriage service.

David was by now a highly popular figure, and his father-in-law, Richard Owen, was prominent and greatly respected, so the event roused an outburst of popular enthusiasm. Villagers hung out flags and bunting along the road by which the bridal couple drove back to Criccieth, where the little town fêted the occasion. The pair went off by the mid-day train for a honeymoon in London, leaving Criccieth to celebrate the wedding with illuminations and fireworks.

After their return from their honeymoon the young couple for a time made their home at Mynydd Ednyfed. But his marriage did not in any way check Lloyd George's eager political activities. By now he had his eye very definitely fixed on Parliament, and took not only thought but action to build up his local status and influence. In the very month of his wedding he joined with D. R. Daniel, a keen young local Welsh Nationalist, to found in Pwllheli a local Welsh journal, *Udgorn Rhyddid* (Trumpet of Freedom)—the first of several newspapers initiated by him; for Lloyd George had learned very early, from his "Brutus" articles, the value of the Press as a means of influencing the public.

There were at that time three parliamentary constituencies in Caernarvonshire—North and South Caernarvonshire, and the Caernarvon District Boroughs, consisting of Caernarvon, Bangor, Conway, Criccieth, Pwllheli and Nevin. This last constituency was at that time represented in Parliament by a Conservative, Edmund Swetenham, Q.C., who had won it in 1886; and there was no Liberal candidate in the field. Lloyd George was very much the most vigorous figure in the Liberal Associations of South Caernarvonshire, and by July 1888 he had been not only talked of but actually chosen as their nominee by the Associations of Criccieth, Pwllheli and Nevin. The northern Boroughs were much more dubious about him. Their leading members were staid, cautious folk who had little sympathy with the fervid Welsh Nationalism that Lloyd George was now preaching, and feared that his radical ideas would be unwelcome to the tradesmen in their towns. But while they hesitated, an event occurred which set his fame ringing through North Wales.

This was the Llanfrothen Burial Case, a somewhat gruesome affair in the little village of Llanfrothen, across the Glaslyn estuary from Portmadoc. In 1864 the churchyard had been enlarged through the gift of a piece of land by a Mr. and Mrs. Owen, and in 1869 the parishioners raised the money to build a wall enclosing it. In 1880 the Liberal Government carried the "Osborne Morgan" Burial Act, authorizing the burial of Dissenters in their parish churchyard with their own denominational rites, and in 1881 a Dissenter was so buried in this Llanfrothen churchyard annexe. The Rector was furious, and as the land had never been formally conveyed by legal document to the parish, he got Mrs. Owen to sign a deed conveying it to him on trust for the parishioners, with the proviso

that burials should be in accordance with the rites of the Anglican Church. Now, in 1888, an old quarryman died, after asking on his deathbed that his body should be laid beside his daughter's, which already lay in this plot. When the grave was being dug, the Rector was served with a notice under the Burial Act of 1880 that the funeral would be conducted by the Calvinistic Methodist minister of whose flock Robert Roberts had been a member. Sure of his power under the deed of conveyance, the Rector refused permission and had the grave filled in, telling the relatives that they could bury their dead in a bleak, neglected corner of the old graveyard reserved for suicides, unknown drowned bodies and non-Christians.

The relatives appealed to Lloyd George for advice. He studied the case; noted the evidence as to date of the original unconditional gift of the land to the parish; and told them that they were within their rights in carrying out the funeral according to the deceased's wishes. They did so, and when the Rector locked the graveyard gate and refused the key, on Lloyd George's advice they broke open the gate and laid Robert Roberts to rest beside his daughter, with a service conducted by their Calvinistic Methodist pastor.

The Rector sued them in Portmadoc County Court, and Lloyd George defended the case. He brought out the facts in a clear and unsparing cross-examination of the Rector, and the jury correctly found that the land had been given verbally to the parish in 1864 and enclosed by the parishioners in 1869. The Judge, however, found for the plaintiff. He also committed the blunder of making an incorrect note of the jury's findings and refusing to amend it—a serious matter, as Lloyd George insisted on taking an appeal to the Divisional Court. Here the Judges recognized the soundness of the case he presented, and severely censured the County Court Judge for having refused to amend his note of the jury's finding. Nor did the Rector's conduct escape their displeasure. Mr. Justice Manisty, who with Lord Chief Justice Coleridge was trying the case, remarked:

"This piece of land had certainly been used since 1869 as part of the churchyard, in which I am happy to think Dissenters and Non-conformists would have a right to be buried if they were parishioners; but an attempt was made in 1881 to vest it in three trustees for the purpose of excluding Nonconformists and Dissenters. That is not a pleasant kind of thing. It is the kind of thing a person passes by; therefore, keeping to what we have to deal with, I will deal with the rights of the case according to law and put the Rector out of the case."

This verdict, which completely exonerated Lloyd George's clients, and fully supported the advice he had given them, was jubilantly acclaimed

as a dazzling triumph by Welsh Nonconformity. It is hard for the average person today to realize the intensity of denominational conflict which existed at that time between Church and Chapel in the countryside and the smaller towns. Dissenters had only recently won full legal toleration. Social and religious toleration had still to be gained. In Wales the strife was specially bitter because it was mingled with the struggle for racial toleration. So Welsh Nonconformists—which meant the great bulk of the population—were frenzied with delight at the issue of the Llanfrothen Burial Case, and Lloyd George became their hero. His success in this affair was the biggest single cause among the many which combined to raise him by degrees to a pinnacle of adoring popularity among his fellow-countrymen.

It can readily be understood that his business thrived more than ever. A solicitor who could win such dramatic victories for his clients was sure of plenty of patronage, particularly when, as in this instance, the victories were due not merely to his courage and address, but to his sure knowledge of the law. But a more important result for his future career was the fact that his enhanced popularity captured the doubtful Liberals of Bangor and Caernarvon. Bangor, indeed, he won over with a brilliant Welsh oration at a meeting there in August. With the fall of the year, the six Boroughs set about choosing their candidate from a list of four nominees, one of whom withdrew his name in November, leaving Lloyd George to compete with Prof. Johnson of Trinity College, Dublin, and the Rev. Lloyd Jones of Rhyl. Despite the fears and hesitations of the cautious elders of the Party the vivid and pugnacious young Welsh Nationalist won the nomination, and was chosen prospective Gladstonian Liberal candidate for the Boroughs.

The nomination, it is interesting to note, was far from welcome to his wife, who was dead against his standing for Parliament. She would much have preferred him to remain in Wales as a practising solicitor, and she wept when he decided to contest the constituency, probably foreseeing that election to Westminster meant separation from her beloved Criccieth.

In this year, 1888, the Conservative Government had passed the Local Government Act which set up County Councils to administer the countryside, as Borough Councils already controlled the towns. This was a great step forward. Until then, the rural areas had been governed by the Justices of the Peace—nominated, not elected, figures, consisting mainly of the local squires and parsons, and from their oligarchic rule there had been no appeal to the popular voice. It was this squire-cum-parson rule which planted such a rebellious antagonism to them in young Lloyd George's mind. But now their empire was being ended, and in January 1889 the Welsh proceeded to elect their new local administrators.

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Lloyd George threw himself eagerly into this fight, which he insisted must be contested on party lines in order to ensure that the new Councils should be pledged to progressive policies. He was too busy travelling round the county, speaking and organizing the struggle, to stand for election himself, though he could have had the choice of four seats. A brief report in the *Caernarvon Herald* on 18th January, 1889, of one of his electioneering speeches, made the previous evening on behalf of four local Liberal candidates, shows that he was still hammering at his favourite topics of access to land, hostility to game-preserving landlords, defence of Nonconformity and exaltation of Welsh Nationalism. The report mentioned that after one of the Liberal candidates had apologized to his Conservative friends for the introduction of politics into the election,

“Mr. Lloyd George, who was enthusiastically received, laid great stress upon this fact and most emphatically declared that it would be impossible to keep politics out of the Councils, as they were to be appealed to in matters of politics, and he referred to the power given as to allotments. He made a hit which was vociferously cheered when he said that rivers were being kept as a sort of preserve for the aristocracy, and that trout and salmon were considered too sacred to be on the tables of the common people. He made an earnest and eloquent appeal to Nonconformists to repel the slur which had always been cast upon them as a body, and urged them to set aside all personal and family matters and give Wales as a nation a ‘lift’ in the eyes of all England.”

The speech preserved in this rather tattered report was only one among many which he delivered up and down the county in the course of the campaign. The rewarding result was a sweeping victory for the Liberal candidates, a victory widely duplicated throughout Wales. At a demonstration held by the Liverpool Welsh Liberal Association in Hope Hall, Liverpool, on 12th February, 1889, where Lloyd George was the chief speaker, he moved amid loud applause a resolution:

“That this meeting expresses deep satisfaction at the results of the recent County Council elections in Wales, and trusts that they will encourage Welsh Liberals in and out of the Principality still further to develop and improve their organization, and further pledges itself to renewed efforts for the advancement of Welsh national claims.”

After some pardonable jubilation over the downfall of the Tories, who were outnumbered by the Liberals two to one in the new Welsh County Councils, Lloyd George spoke with eager praise of the rise of

Welsh Nationalism which the elections had demonstrated. Welsh Nationalism, he claimed, was not a hostile movement to the Liberalism of the country, but simply an intensification of Liberalism—Liberal enthusiasm worked up to a glowing red by the blasts of patriotism. There had been a revolution in Wales, in the sense of Victor Hugo's definition of a revolution: "Progress, and progress tomorrow!" The Welsh must now organize themselves and follow the example of the Irish, whose unity and persistence were winning them the prize of a series of splendid measures for their benefit in Parliament.

His efforts to get Liberals returned to the Council were rewarded when the new body met, and chose him and A. H. D. Acland, M.P., as Aldermen. "The boy Alderman" he was dubbed by critics, on account of his youthful appearance; but he continued to be re-elected to the office long after the phrase had become inappropriate.

He played a prominent part in the Council, seeing in it an instrument for advancing some of the reforms in which he was interested, such as Leasehold Enfranchisement and Local Option, and, still more, a loophole for bringing in an instalment of Welsh Home Rule. For this purpose he worked hard to promote an Association of Welsh County Councils which might become a sort of parliament for Welsh affairs.

In May 1889 he became the leading figure in another of those legal battles with the land-owning J.P.s of the district which were making him renowned and beloved among the masses of his fellow-countrymen. This was the Nantlle Lake case. The lake was close to the slate-quarrying village of Talysarn, in mid-Caernarvonshire, and the quarrymen were fond of fish. The river Llyfnwy which drained the lake was strictly preserved, and the district Conservators summoned four of the quarrymen for fishing the lake with a net. Lloyd George undertook their defence.

He gave an exhibition of legal adroitness and hard-hitting advocacy of the rights of the common folk against their game-preserving lords that was without precedent in the annals of the local courts. He contended that while the rivers of the district might be under the Conservators, the lake was not, and the case had to be adjourned to get a certificate from the Secretary of State defining the Fishery District. When it arrived, it named the rivers but not the lake, and Lloyd George denied the right of jurisdiction of the Court, pending a decision in the Court of Queen's Bench. The magistrates ruled that they had jurisdiction. If Mr. Lloyd George liked, he could appeal against their finding, and the question would be decided in a superior Court.

"Yes, sir; and in a perfectly just and unbiassed court, too," exclaimed L.G. warmly.

The Chairman was furious at the innuendo. "If that remark of Mr. George's is meant as a reflection on any magistrate sitting on this Bench,

I hope that he will name him. A more insulting and ungentlemanly remark to the Bench I never heard during the course of my experience as a magistrate!"

"But a more true remark was never made in a court of justice," retorted L.G.; and when the Chairman sternly insisted on knowing to whom he referred, he said, "I refer to you, sir, in particular!"

The Chairman rose and left the chair in high dudgeon. The other magistrates declared that they would not proceed with the case till Mr. George apologized. He did not apologize and they all retired. Presently they all came back, rather sheepishly, and contented themselves with recording their condemnation of his remarks, and the case proceeded. After Lloyd George had mercilessly cross-examined the chief witness for the prosecution and had exposed his unreliability to such an extent that one of the magistrates declared it was a very serious thing to have a man of this sort to give evidence, the affair ended tamely with the acquittal of two of the accused, and nominal fines of a shilling each for the other two. But the tale of how young Lloyd George had triumphantly bearded the chief magistrate rang round the countryside.

As prospective Liberal candidate for the Boroughs, Lloyd George was able to take a growingly prominent part in Welsh Liberal activities, and used his power to press to the fore the Welsh Nationalist programme. On 12th June, 1889, he was seconding a resolution in the Executive Committee of the North Wales Liberal Federation, upbraiding Mr. Gladstone for his absence from a recent debate on Welsh Disestablishment in Parliament, and threatening him with the withdrawal of Welsh Liberal support if this issue were not given equality of treatment with Irish Home Rule! He continued to appear at local Temperance rallies, and in the County Council and at public meetings he commended the virtues of Local Option.

He also started a campaign which was to absorb a good deal of his time and energy in the next few years. This was his struggle to unite the Liberals of North and South Wales in a single League. Wales has always been weakened by its internal dissensions and divisions, particularly the dichotomy of North and South; and Welsh Liberalism perpetuated this dualism in the two separate North and South Welsh Federations, which were nominally linked by a rather inert body called the Welsh National Council. On 18th October, 1889, this Council opened its annual meetings at Caernarvon, side by side with the annual meetings of the North Wales Liberal Federation, and Lloyd George used the opportunity to press his thesis that the Council and the two Federations should be amalgamated into a Welsh National League, with a programme in which Liberalism would be mainly construed as Welsh Nationalism.

The scheme was far from popular, especially among the established

leaders of the two Federations, who not unnaturally felt little inclination to demolish the movements, to which they had devoted so many years of constructive effort, in order to commit the ark of Welsh Liberalism to the keeping of some youthful hotheads with a revolutionary programme of Nationalism, adapted from the Irish model. When a resolution putting forward the scheme was moved in the National Council by one of L.G.'s supporters, R. A. Griffiths of Caernarvon, it was opposed by the venerable Congregationalist divine, the Rev. Herber Evans. Herber Evans was a pulpit orator for whose preaching L.G. always had the highest esteem, and was also the chief figure in North Welsh Liberalism. His caution was echoed by Thomas Gee, the apostle of Welsh Nationalism. But Lloyd George was never submissive to persons, however highly he respected them, when they took a line with which he disagreed, and he was soon on his feet in support of the unpopular motion. One of the great historical blunders of their forefathers, he declared, was the division of Wales into the two provinces of North and South. It was a calamitous precedent, and not one to be followed.

"And what is the outcome of the institution of two independent Federations? The South Wales Federation meets one day and passes sweeping resolutions imbued with the national sentiment. Shortly afterwards, the North Wales Federation meets at Chester or some other English town, and passes resolutions of an entirely antagonistic character. The South Wales friends meet at Bridgend and fiercely denounce the Llandrindod conference" (of the Welsh National Council) "for its half-heartedness. The week following, the North Wales Executive meets at Blaenau Festiniog and with equal ferocity condemns the proceedings at Llandrindod for their forwardness. Instead of unity and co-operation, we find perpetual bickerings and dissensions. . . . Wales is already plentifully supplied with religious and political schisms without creating another. It would be an advantage to fuse the two organizations, were it only to impregnate the timid, genteel Liberalism of the Northern Committee with the robust, plucky Liberalism of the South."

He argued that a really national League would secure the co-operation of all Liberals, whereas the present Federations were represented by men chosen only by a small inner caucus. It would also gain a sounder financial backing, which would enable it better to champion the cause of its members if any of them were victimized by Tory employers or landlords. His speech won rounds of applause, but it failed to move the intractable mass of party delegates, and the resolution was rejected by a large majority.

This was the first of many defeats which he was to suffer in his struggle to build up a united Welsh Liberal party.

On other themes his oratory was more successful. At this same conference he seconded a resolution in favour of Disestablishment which was enthusiastically carried at a big public meeting where Sir William Harcourt was the chief figure. In December he carried a resolution in favour of Local Option at the meetings of the National Liberal Federation in Manchester. In February 1890 he attended the annual meetings of the South Wales Liberal Federation at Cardiff, where he made a moving appeal for Welsh Home Rule. He began his speech, as was his custom, in a quietly humorous vein, with a dig at the slow-moving, "rather obtuse political intelligence of average Englishmen", and proceeded to point out that every argument in favour of Home Rule for Ireland could with equal force be used to support Home Rule for Wales; while the objections to Irish Home Rule did not apply to Wales. Home Rule would not spell Rome Rule in Protestant Nonconformist Wales, and Wales had no Ulster. When he reached his peroration, the sermonic note which was never far away in L.G.'s oratory became very marked, and there was even a touch of the "Hwyl"—the rapt, half-chanting ecstasy to which Welsh preachers were wont to rise in their more exalted passages:

"There is a momentous time coming. The dark continent of wrong is being explored and there is a missionary spirit abroad for its reclamation to the realm of right. A holy war has been proclaimed against 'man's inhumanity to man', and the people of Europe are thronging to the crusade. (Applause.) The great question for us to determine is this: whether in this mighty Armageddon, Wales shall simply be the standard-bearer of another nation or shall, like 'Ddraig-goch', once more lead forth a nation to do battle for the right as of old. (Applause.) As a Welshman I feel confident that, once it is afforded the opportunity, my country will act its part honourably in the conflict. The ennobling influences of Christians have not played upon her heart in a whole century in vain. They have elevated and guided her impulses; they have awakened for ever her national enthusiasm. That is why I feel sanguine that, were self-government conceded to Wales, she would be a model to the nationalities of the earth of a people who have driven oppression from their hillsides and initiated the glorious reign of freedom, justice and truth." (Loud applause.)

The *Caernarvon Herald* of 7th February, 1890, reporting the meeting, recorded that the resolution was carried with acclamation but that a good many of the M.P.s and official figures of the Party slipped away

before the vote. They were loth to submit themselves to the policy and leadership of the fiery young apostle of Welsh Nationalism and his associates. Lloyd George was not yet a name to conjure with throughout Wales, nor were the Caernarvon Boroughs, whose delegate he was, a famous constituency in February 1890. Indeed, Lloyd George would have had nowhere to stay the night in Cardiff if his speech had not moved a young Congregational minister, the Rev. O. L. Roberts, to offer him hospitality.

His hour, however, was about to strike. In March the Tory member for the Boroughs died suddenly, and Lloyd George, who was just twenty-seven and looked much younger, faced his first election contest. The outlook for him was far from bright. The Liberal Party was still in disorder, with an uncertain policy of which the most prominent feature, Irish Home Rule, roused little enthusiasm and some misgiving. In the Boroughs the organization was faulty and disconnected, and the older and more influential leaders were dubious about Lloyd George and his Nationalist ideas. The situation was one that called for very tactful handling. But with all his proved capacity for ruthless and defiant aggressiveness, Lloyd George could achieve miracles of tact in the handling of people when he chose to do so.

He chose now, and produced an election address which was laid before a meeting of delegates from the Liberal Associations of the Caernarvon Boroughs at a meeting in Caernarvon on 24th March, 1890, and secured their unanimous support. It was an ingenious document. It vigorously advocated all his pet policies—Welsh Home Rule, Disestablishment, Local Option, Leasehold Enfranchisement and other measures of Land Reform, but interwove them with articles in the general Liberal programme so that the two elements were indistinguishable, and appeared to be all equally Gladstonian. "Gladstone's Noble Policy of Justice for Ireland" was made to imply similar measures for Wales. Local Option had, largely through his pressure, been thrust into the Liberal programme. As for Welsh Home Rule, it was adroitly swept in with a mixed bag of popular Liberal slogans:

"I believe in a liberal extension of the principle of Decentralization. There are also such questions as 'One Man One Vote', Graduated Taxation, 'A Free Breakfast Table', and many another much-needed reform: but what availeth it even to enumerate them while there is a Tory Government in power?"

The Liberal seasoning of the dish charmed the palates of the more elderly and cautious local patriarchs of the Party. The insistence on Welsh Nationalist ideals rallied the enthusiasm of the younger genera-

tion, which was in revolt against the long subservience to England that had been so much the fashion in the Principality. Orthodoxy and Zealotry came together in support of L.G., and he welded the two with the fiery glow of his oratory as he sped around the constituency, holding meetings everywhere and preaching his political gospel with the soul-shaking fervour of an evangelist.

The Tories at first made the criminal mistake of under-valuing their opponent. What was he? A local village lad, a small-town lawyer, with neither education, wealth nor established position. They asked Mr. Ellis Nanney, the squire of Llanystumdwy, who had twice previously fought the constituency without success, to take it on again. Although "Brutus" had written of him in November 1880, when Nanney made his first attempt, "You are just the man whom the electors of Caernarvonshire would delight to reject with contumely," he was a benevolent and not unpopular figure. At first he turned down the offer for reasons of health; and a Liberal Unionist barrister, Marchant Williams, was put forward. He, however, decided not to stand, and Nanney agreed to take on the task.

There has been drama in plenty in Lloyd George's career; but the stage could hardly invent a more dramatic scene than this of the contest between the Llanystumdwy squire and the village lad who had led schoolboy revolts against his bland patronage. The simile of David and Goliath was inevitable; and certainly this David slung his stones with masterly aim. He was glad, he declared in an election speech at Caernarvon on 27th March, that his opponent was the Squire, for he was undoubtedly the best man the Tory Party could bring forward; a capital representative of his Party, one of the aristocracy, a landlord and moneyed gentleman, while Lloyd George was one of the people, born and bred among them.

"I have read the report of last night's Conservative meeting from which I see that the one great qualification Mr. Nanney possesses in order to become the Tory Party's candidate is that he is a man of wealth, and that the great disqualification in my case is that I am possessed of none. ('Oh' and laughter.) The Tories forget that they are not now living in the seventeenth century. I once heard a man wildly declaiming against Mr. Tom Ellis as a parliamentary representative, but according to that man, Mr. Ellis's disqualification consisted mainly in the fact that he had been brought up in a cottage! (Laughter and applause.) The Tories have not yet realized that the day of the cottage-bred man has at last dawned!" (Loud applause.)

The constituency was small and scattered. Only four thousand votes were cast in what was to prove an election of immense historic

importance. The Liberal organization was faulty and Lloyd George had to make up for its defects by speeches and an immense amount of personal canvassing. It began to dawn on the Tories that this young cottage-bred lawyer was going to give them a run for their money, and they rallied their talent for the fight, sending down the chief Tory agent for Wales to superintend it. Their organization was efficient; they boasted that at the last revision of the register they had succeeded in getting another two hundred Conservative electors added to it. Now, in belated imitation of the charity sometimes practised at Christmas, a local Tory proceeded to distribute coal to the poor of Caernarvon.

In spite of it all, Liberal confidence and enthusiasm grew. Someone wrote to Gladstone prophesying victory, and the "Grand Old Man" answered with a confident note:

"Your sanguine anticipations do not surprise me. My surprise would be this time, if a Welsh constituency were to return a gentleman who, whether Tory or Liberal, would vote against the claims which Wales is now justly making that her interests and feelings should at length be recognized in concerns properly her own. . . ."

The conflict thickened as M.P.s poured down to join in the fight—Sir John Puleston for the Tories, Mr. Acland for the Liberals. Ulstermen came over from Ireland to support the Union, and Nationalists to plead for Home Rule. In among them all flitted the young Liberal candidate, wooing the electorate in musical Welsh, tickling them with witty sallies and rousing them with impassioned eloquence.

The two candidates were nominated on 2nd April, 1890, and polling took place through the six boroughs on the 10th. The Tories raked in every voter on whose support they could count. There were as yet no motor-cars, but the carriages of the county were mustered to fetch scattered electors. One man was even brought from Wolverhampton.

Next morning the votes were counted in the basement of the Caernarvon Town Hall. The dramatic suspense of the contest was sustained up to the very last moment. As the voting papers were sorted, it was clear that the result would be extremely close. The piles were practically even. But Nanney's slightly topped that of Lloyd George, and the figures were swiftly whispered round the room. With cheerful self-control, Lloyd George started to advance on his opponent with congratulations, when one of his tellers spotted some Liberal votes in a bundle on the Tory pile. "Insist on a recount," muttered a friend, and Lloyd George did so. The errant votes were transferred, and gave him a majority of 20. Now the Tories demanded a recount, and once again the papers were told over. One paper returned to the Tory pile at this

## FROM LAW COURT TO PARLIAMENT

final checking, and the mayor went forth to the crowd that packed the street outside and announced the result of the poll:

David Lloyd George	..	..	..	1,963
Ellis Nanney	..	..	..	1,945

By a majority of 18, David Lloyd George was declared elected as Member of Parliament for the Caernarvon District Boroughs.

The waiting throng went mad with excitement. The *Caernarvon Herald* reported that

“Mr. Lloyd George was drawn in a carriage through the town by a tremendous crowd. Arriving at Castle Square, he was greeted with ‘Three Cheers for the boy M.P.!’ which were lustily given. Speaking in Welsh, he said: ‘My dear fellow-countrymen, the county of Caernarvon today is free. (Loud cheers.) The banner of Wales is borne aloft, and the Boroughs have wiped away the stains. (Loud cheers.) I hope that whoever will be contesting the next election (cries of “It will be you”), he will not fail to achieve a similar victory. The contest has been carried on by both sides in the best possible good humour. It has been a battle of principles. (Cries of “Coal” and laughter.) I thank you from my heart, and all those who have worked so hard for the Liberal cause. I specially wish to thank the Ladies’ Liberal League.’ (Three cheers were here given to the Ladies’ League.)”

Then amid wild cheering and uproar he drove back to another tumultuous welcome at Criccieth, and so home to savour the most treasured congratulations of all—those of his wife and his Uncle Richard. The first stage of his life’s journey was accomplished. He was a Member of Parliament.



*Part II*

POLITICAL KNIGHT-ERRANT

1890—1905



## CHAPTER V

### A CHAMPION OF WALES

THE enthusiasm of the Caernarvon Boroughs for their new member was still bubbling over when Lloyd George started off for London a few days after his election. The Conway folk prepared a welcome for him as exuberant as that of Caernarvon. They held a thanksgiving meeting for his victory as his train approached the town, and when it arrived they put him in a carriage and pulled it with ropes to their concourse at the Town Hall. There he addressed them in Welsh, amid thunders of applause, adding an English summary for the benefit of those monoglot supporters who had no Welsh. It was a shrewd, practical speech, urging them to translate their enthusiasm into an effective reorganization of the Liberal machinery in the constituency—for Lloyd George never made the mistake of supposing that emotional excitement could serve as a substitute for hard work. Then, so the *Caernarvon Herald* reported, “a procession was formed. About fifty torch-bearers led the carriage conveying the hon. gentleman and a few friends through the principal streets, and the enthusiasm was such as has not often been witnessed in the annals even of ancient Conway.”

The cheering faded in the distance as he travelled on next day to London. In Caernarvonshire he was universally known and immensely popular. But, for all his youth and comparative inexperience, he was acute enough to know that in the political world of London he would at the outset be a very insignificant figure. A young, unknown country solicitor, member for a small, remote and undistinguished Welsh constituency, who had scraped into Parliament by less than a score of votes to join the Opposition, he might be welcomed by them as a symbol of returning success, a first swallow that hinted a hope of a coming Liberal summer; but he would not be prized very highly for his own sake.

He had, to be sure, his brief moment in the limelight, when on Thursday, 17th April, 1890, he took his seat. It was Budget night, and the House was full. An eye-witness described the scene in the following terms:

“It was a striking sight, the closely packed benches, the Chancellor of the Exchequer with many little volumes of notes bracing himself for a grand effort; while immediately below the venerable figure of Lord Cottesloe stood the young M.P. for the Caernarvon Boroughs, nearly seventy years his junior, pale with excitement and the thoughts

of the career opening before him, waiting for the last answer to be given before taking his seat.

"He had plenty of time to study the scene of his future labours and to weave golden dreams if he chose, for the Boulak Museum, the Portuguese Imbroglia and the Indian Factory Law still blocked the way.

"When at last the young Member, with his sensitive face and slight, boyish figure, advanced to the table between Mr. Stuart Rendel and Mr. Arthur Acland, the cheers were loud and hearty; and they scarcely subsided when Mr. Goschen had risen and was congratulating the House upon the state of the national balance-sheet and 'the absence of any costly expeditions, which have so often marred the fairest prospects of Chancellors of the Exchequer'."

(*Caernarvon Herald*, 2nd May, 1890.)

No one, not even the young member with his golden dreams, could foresee that before twenty years were passed he himself would stand where Goschen stood, to open the most famous and historically important Budget of modern times.

That evening L.G. wrote to his brother William on House of Commons notepaper:

"After a very enthusiastic reception by the Liberal Members of the House on my introduction by Acland and Stuart Rendel (Mabon not in the House), I am off to dine with my friend Sir John Puleston!

"Goschen has just sat down I believe after delivering a very long speech in introducing his Budget—he has taken 2d. off tea—that's one good thing."

Puleston, the Tory member for Devonport, had done his best to secure Lloyd George's defeat in the election, and was planning to stand against him next time in person. But both were Welshmen with a keen interest in Welsh affairs, and the older man gave his young fellow-member a first experience of the friendly social relations which traditionally subsist in British politics between opponents when outside the Chamber.

Kindly courtesy of this sort, however, could not change the fact that on his first arrival at Westminster—and indeed for some years afterwards—Lloyd George was labouring under heavy handicaps in his upward course. At that time nearly all the members of the House were men who had either been born to wealth and distinguished position or had achieved these advantages by way of the professions, commerce or industry. A high proportion of them were members or connections of

aristocratic families, or were landed gentry. It was a House composed—apart from some of the Irish Nationalists—almost exclusively of the upper and upper-middle classes.

In the England of 1890 social distinctions were far more rigid and tyrannical than people today can easily appreciate. At the top was Society (with a capital S), a limited and exclusive circle centring round the Court, consisting of affluent and leisured members of the nobility and gentry, born of distinguished families. Beyond them was a penumbra of wealthy folk who aped Society but had no free entrée to it, though some of them might be determined climbers. They included the New Rich who had made their money; and close behind them came the prosperous merchants and manufacturers who were still making theirs. To work for your living was a badge of inferior caste, and none could be presented at Queen Victoria's Court if they or their father had ever engaged in retail trade. There were infinitely delicate yet strictly drawn gradations of rank and social status among professional and business people, right down to the ranks of the "working classes"; divisions stereotyped by customs of paying calls and leaving cards, and by distinctions between those who could and could not be invited to tea. A pale reflection of this caste tyranny may still sometimes be met in the English countryside, where faded folk claiming "county" status will not meet socially their prosperous farmer neighbours, whose sons—leading barristers or doctors—may be accepted in the highest circles in London. But such out-of-date snobbery is only a lingering echo of the fanatically worshipped class distinctions of half a century ago. Lloyd George and the motor-car both played leading parts in disrupting that system.

In 1890 there were no motor-cars to undermine the exclusive status of the carriage-folk, and Lloyd George had to struggle in a way the present generation cannot understand against the crushing weight of his social inferiority. A village lad with only a National School education, the adopted son of a tradesman, and himself a small-town lawyer, desperately poor by the standards of those with whom he was now mingling, he had nothing to commend him outside his as yet unknown capacities of mind and character. The reputation he brought with him to London was that of a local mob orator who had been conducting a fanatical crusade for Welsh Nationalism. Cynical political circles in town curled their lips and awaited with amused contempt any uncouth efforts he might make to inflict his rustic eloquence upon them.

Lloyd George was poor; for although he had built up a highly successful legal practice in Portmadoc, and was on the way to become well-to-do by the modest standards of that neighbourhood, an income that spelt comfort in Portmadoc was far less adequate in London. Besides, as an M.P. he was cut off from his practice for a large part of the year,

and things might have been very difficult indeed for him but for the loyal help of his brother William, who kept the practice going single-handed while David was at Westminster. His election, too, had made a hole in his reserves, for he gallantly refused help offered by friends, and met the whole cost out of his own pocket. He kept the total down to the humble figure of £200, but even that sum was a serious drain on a young man who had recently started with no capital.

After that first election, the Liberal Association in the Boroughs grew stronger, and insisted on paying its member's election expenses up to the time when he entered the Cabinet and began to draw a Minister's salary. But during the first fifteen years at Westminster Lloyd George was considerably cramped by shortage of money. Temperamentally he was not parsimonious, and it irked him to look at both sides of a penny before spending it. He was never a money-grubber, and there were many tasks in life which he would choose before that of making a fortune. But while his upbringing had trained him in frugal habits and tastes, many of which he retained all his life long, he suffered during those early years in London from the irk of poverty. No doubt his experience helped to sharpen his sympathy with the lot of the poor, which he did so much to improve, and heightened his antagonism to the wealthy leisured classes with their calm assumption of a divinely ordered superior status and of their vested right to power and privilege.

Poverty, limited education and lack of social experience were serious initial handicaps. But to set against them he had exhaustless energy, an unlimited capacity for hard work, a lightning-quick intellect and a shrewd and discerning eye. If he lacked experience in the ways of parliamentary life, he had what was even more valuable—an uncanny psychological gift for capturing the atmosphere of an assembly and knowing the minds of those with whom he spoke. The House of Commons, he realized at once, was not a Welsh Temperance meeting. Well, he would study how to address it and bide his time. Meanwhile he set to work to master its rules of procedure with the same thoroughness that he had given to mastering the intricacies of the laws of property and the conventions of county courts.

His early speeches as a Member of Parliament were made, not in the House, but to more familiar and congenial audiences outside. The first was at the annual meeting of the Liberation Society, held in the Metropolitan Tabernacle on 7th May, 1890. It was presided over by Campbell-Bannerman, and the new Welsh member, with his reputation as an opponent of the Establishment of the Church of Wales, was invited to be one of the speakers. He prepared his oration with the painstaking care which to the end was habitual with him. Great orators may be born, not made; but great orations do not therefore flow from them without effort. For all

their natural eloquence, such men work far harder in preparing and polishing their discourses than less gifted speakers, who too often are content to throw a few hasty notes together, or even in slovenly fashion leave all to the inspiration of the moment. However full Lloyd George might be of his subject, he never willingly relied on that fulness to furnish without preparation the flow of his public utterances. He thought out beforehand each point that he proposed to make, each telling sentence, each vivid image or analogy. In this case he sent along to his brother William the notes of the speech he had prepared for the Tabernacle meeting, to get his criticisms and those of Uncle Richard—the “esgob” (bishop), as he affectionately called him in his letter.

To his chagrin the young unknown member, being reckoned the least important figure on the platform, was put up to fill the last ten minutes of the meeting, “stuck at the very end after three or four weary and dreary speakers and a collection had depleted the building of a considerable part of its audience and all but one or two of the reporters”, as he wrote home next day. But from the moment that he started to speak he had the audience in his fingers. Not a man stirred. They laughed. They cheered. After 25 minutes they were surprised and disappointed that he stopped.

The speech at once made his reputation. His new Liberal colleagues were taken by surprise, and realized that they had underestimated him. Invitations to address minor gatherings he had already received in plenty, but from now on his presence was coveted at the most important meetings.

The reports of this Tabernacle speech showed how easily and skilfully he had adapted his style to the Nonconformist Liberal taste of his audience. His theme was of course the demand for Welsh Disestablishment.

“The spiritual wants of the Welsh people,” he declared, “are attended to by Nonconformity. The Nonconformist chapels are crowded, but the churches of the Establishment are forsaken in every rural district in Wales. It is Nonconformity that has been doing the religious and spiritual work of Wales. It is the same old story—it is not the people who do the work who receive the pay. In fact, it is a very old story. If you recollect, it was Elisha who cleansed Naaman’s leprosy but it was Gehazi who secured the emoluments. It is Nonconformity that cleansed the moral leprosy which had afflicted Wales under the quack doctoring of the Established Church, but it is the Gehazi of the Establishment that is enjoying the emoluments!”

He poured scorn on the claims then being made by apologists for the Welsh Church—notably by the Bishop of St. Asaph—that it was

experiencing a revival of strength. Such accessions as it seemed to be gaining were the results of bribery or coercion. Landowners made Anglicanism a condition when letting their farms, and tempted the poor with coal, tea, blankets and other Christmas doles to desert Nonconformity.

“Contrast the charity of the Church of England squireen in Wales with the munificence of those who spent a fortune in feeding the poor. Contrast it even with the charity of Dives. Dives was a good fellow in his liberality towards Lazarus as compared with these. (Laughter.) Let me tell you what he did. He actually allowed Lazarus to be on equal terms with his dogs. (Renewed laughter.) I believe that he gave him the first chance of the crumbs that fell from his table. And he never imposed a single condition upon his charity. But what do these charitable lordlings, these squires and parsons, do? This is what they say: ‘If there are any crumbs of my income remaining after liberally feeding my dogs, my pheasants and my hares, I will allow you to partake of them; but upon two conditions—you must vote for my nominee, and you must join my synagogue.’” (Applause.)

At the end of May he was back in North Wales, heading a deputation from the Caernarvon Boroughs Women’s Liberal Association which visited Hawarden and presented an Address to Mrs. Gladstone. These Women Liberals were Lloyd George’s most devoted and tireless workers. Indeed, all his life long he had the gift of inspiring unbounded loyalty in women to him, and of calling forth their fullest service and sacrifice. As a small boy he was worshipped by his grandmother, who would allow no criticism of him; and after her death his mother and sister delighted to wait on him hand and foot. When he embarked on his political activities women came forward at every turn to help him. With his striking good looks, his electric vitality and his genial, winning ways, they found him irresistible. During his anti-tithe crusade, it was a woman who drove him round in her dog-cart to address meetings outside churches and parsonages. The women of the Boroughs worked hardest to secure his return at his first election, and it was not without reason that when speaking after the declaration of the poll he should single them out for his special thanks.

At this Hawarden ceremony the Grand Old Man was present and addressed the gathering, congratulating them on winning the Caernarvon Boroughs to Liberalism, despite the formidable influence of Penrhyn Castle. Truth, justice and freedom, he declared, were greater even than Penrhyn Castle.

Fresh from this stimulus, Lloyd George spoke on 5th June, 1890, at a big Rally in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, organized by the United

Kingdom Temperance Alliance to protest against a Bill then being promoted by the Conservative Government to compensate publicans who lost their licences. Against this proposal Lloyd George produced in his speech an argument drawn from his legal training. The publican, he said, was appealing to equity and claiming compensation. There was a grand old maxim in the law of Equity which he wished to see applied to that claim, namely, "He who comes to equity must come with clean hands." Let the liquor traffic display the hand with which it meant to grab compensation. It reeked with human misery, vice and squalor, destitution, crime and death. By that foul hand and with equity let the claim be judged!

On this occasion, too, he was as a young, unknown speaker relegated to the tail of the meeting, and the report in the *Cambrian News* said that when he rose to speak

"some hundreds of people were in the act of leaving their seats, only as usual just waiting to see what sort of stuff the next speaker was made of. Mr. George had not been on his feet for five minutes before he fairly brought down the house. Apologizing for keeping the audience so long, he was overwhelmed with cries of 'Go on!' and a voice from the gallery saying 'We will stop with thee all night, my boy!' . . . The people became almost unmanageable when Mr. Lloyd George sat down; the audience sprang to their feet, cheering, waving hats and handkerchiefs in a paroxysm of something very much akin to madness. The Chairman had to sit down, being unable to bring the people to order to terminate the meeting."

Such overwhelming platform successes showed that a new political orator of unique quality had been added to the Liberal Party ranks. But spellbinding at public meetings was a very different thing from effective debate in Parliament, where stood the ladder by which alone one could climb up to the ranks of statesmen. Lloyd George was well aware of this, and patiently studied the moods of the House before venturing to address it.

His opportunity came on 13th June, 1890, during the committee stage of the Local Taxation Bill, which included a proposal for setting aside a fund to compensate publicans whose licences were withdrawn as redundant. The Welsh members were unwilling to propose the exclusion of Wales from this fund, but produced instead an amendment directing that the moneys in question should be devoted to Welsh educational purposes. This was moved by Arthur Acland, and in the course of the debate Lloyd George rose to make his maiden speech.

He spoke for 17 minutes. To the chagrin of those members who,

knowing his reputation for impassioned oratory, were anticipating a chance to scoff at a futile display of fireworks, he attempted nothing of the kind. He was witty, humorous, in the vein of good-natured banter which the House always approves. He attacked the publicans on the ground that they were law-breakers, for every case of drunkenness in a tavern meant a breach of the law by the publican to his own profit. He advanced to an attack on Lord Randolph Churchill and Joseph Chamberlain for their recent change of attitude on this issue, and declared in a simile that delighted the House:

“The fact is that the noble lord and the right hon. gentleman are political contortionists, who can perform the great trick of planting their feet in one direction and setting their faces in another.”

As a maiden speech, the effort was a decided success. It did not “take the House by storm”, though it was warmly applauded. But the papers next day spoke highly of it, and Gladstone was said to be delighted. Harcourt, too, praised it, and Lloyd George found that it had markedly raised his stock among his fellow-members. Less than a fortnight later the obnoxious compensation clauses were withdrawn from the Bill. It is not suggested that Lloyd George killed them, but he had thus early the satisfaction of sharing in a fight and a victory. He began to be sought out by leading Liberals such as Augustine Birrell and John Morley, and Gladstone invited him to Dollis Hill.

But if Lloyd George's first speech demonstrated his skill in adapting his style to his audience, his second, made two months later on 13th August, displayed another side of his character—his stern indifference to popularity where his convictions were involved. For this was an unpopular speech on both sides of the House. He attacked a Supplementary Estimate which included various sums of money voted for what he regarded as unnecessary decorative purposes. He denounced the payment of £439 3s. 4d. for installing Prince Henry of Prussia as a Knight of the Garter. What service had Prince Henry ever rendered to this country to justify the expenditure? He had not yet rendered any service to his own country, let alone to Great Britain. Similarly he opposed the item of £2,769 4s. 8d. for equipage money on appointment of the new Irish Lord Lieutenant, whose office, he said, was a sinecure, as the Chief Secretary was the real ruler of Ireland and the Lord Lieutenant was “simply a man in buttons, who wears silk stockings and has a coat of arms on his carriage”. Then there was £180 for the funeral of the Duchess of Cambridge, whose family had altogether received some three million pounds from the Exchequer. He contrasted these payments with the needs of the sweated workers, about which a report by a Committee of Enquiry had just been published.

Even his friends in Parliament felt the speech to be in bad taste; but that it should be made at all was significant. Measured by the standards of those among whom he now moved, Lloyd George came from the poor and humble levels of the nation. He himself was poor, though not humble, and all his early associations had been among unmoneyed people who were disposed to grumble among themselves at the lavish expenditure of Court and Society; toilers who felt bitterly that an undue share of their earnings went to fill the coffers of the leisured wealthy, to be squandered in needless extravagance. Inevitably he had imbibed their outlook, but not their passivity. He did not grumble; he denounced, and regardless of consequences he uttered his denunciation in the House of Parliament. His protest did not commend him to the heads of his Party, but it was read with appreciation in Llanystumdwy and among the miners and quarrymen of Wales. He had put their thoughts into words.

His growing popularity in Wales was shown when on 5th September he attended the Royal National Eisteddfod and moved a vote of thanks to the Chairman of the day, Sir John Puleston. He was greeted with prolonged cheering and waving of hats and handkerchiefs. The acid humour of the situation was that Sir John had already arranged to abandon his safe seat at Devonport and fight the Caernarvon Boroughs at the next election in order to oust Lloyd George.

The autumn brought a thickening list of speaking engagements for Lloyd George. He had a number in his own constituency, where he could give a creditable account of his services at Westminster. On 29th September he accompanied John Morley to St. Helens for a meeting in favour of Irish Home Rule. In October he was addressing a big Temperance meeting in Manchester, and also speaking on Liberal policy at Leigh, where he linked the Home Rule issue with both Welsh Disestablishment and the new English Labour Movement. The revolt of the Irish against the tyranny of English landlords, he asserted, had sent an electric current through Wales and England, stirring the Welsh to a stronger demand for religious and political freedom and the workmen of England to a new spirit of independence.

By the time that Parliament reassembled for its autumn session Lloyd George could face up to his programme with well-grounded self-confidence. He had established his reputation as a front-rank Liberal speaker in the country. He had taken the measure of the House and gained a good idea of what could be done there. He had played to his trial ball, and was ready to settle down to his innings.

His purpose at this time and for the next few years was wholly concentrated upon the fight for Wales. He wanted to achieve the disestablishment of the Welsh Church and the diversion of its endowments to Welsh education and social needs. He wanted Welsh local option as a

means of reducing Welsh intemperance. He wanted Leasehold Enfranchisement for Wales to free the Welsh quarrymen's homes and the Welsh peasants' farms from the feudal grip of the landlord. He wanted better Welsh education, greater opportunities for the Welsh language and Welsh culture. He wanted, in short, a Welsh national revival that would enhance the honour and dignity of the Welsh people and would carry through a big programme of reform.

Politically he was a member of the Welsh Liberal Party. But the rise of the Irish Nationalists had suggested to him the possibilities of political nationalism, and Gladstone's official adoption of Irish Home Rule had brought the clear conception of a similar development in Wales, and led him to frame the purpose of turning the Welsh Liberal Party into a Welsh Nationalist Party, that would win Home Rule for Wales and thereby gain the means of carrying through all the Welsh reforms of which he dreamed.

There were three lines of strategy by which to further this object. In the movement of Welsh cultural revival, *Cymru Fydd*, he was by now the most dynamic figure, and he swung this movement into an organ of propaganda, not only for the various reform measures which he advocated, but for Welsh political autonomy. The Welsh Liberal organizations must also be brought to unite in support of this claim; and the group of Welsh Liberal members in Parliament must be induced to form themselves into an active fighting force, on the model of the Irish Party, to treat every issue exclusively on the ground of its effect on Wales, irrespective of its other merits or demerits, and if need be, to make themselves as troublesome as the Irish had done until their claims were conceded.

Following this strategy, Lloyd George proceeded to open a campaign in Parliament against the Tithe Recovery Bill, which the Tory Government were introducing with the object of putting an end to the anti-tithe campaign in Wales. They proposed to transfer responsibility for paying the tithe from the farmer to the landowner. At the same time a reassessment of the tithe was contemplated.

Lloyd George had made an exhaustive study of the tithe question from both a legal and an historical angle, for the purposes of his anti-tithe campaign. He now brought this knowledge into play when attacking the measure before the Commons. Ably assisted by his friend Sam Evans, the member for Mid-Glamorgan, he fought the Bill, clause by clause, all through the autumn of 1890 and into the following spring. Amendment after amendment was moved by one or other of them, and some not unimportant ones were carried. Indeed, Lloyd George was able to boast to a meeting of his Bangor constituents on 25th March, 1891, that 30 per cent of their amendments were accepted, including three out of five that he moved to the Lords' amendments. He was playing a complex game, for

while he was waging a guerilla warfare against the Bill, he was anxious to mend but not to wreck it. He realized that it would give some relief to Welsh tenant farmers, and would somewhat enhance the value of the tithe. Since he aimed at the disendowment of the Welsh Church and the diversion of the tithe to Welsh education, he had no wish to diminish it.

He scored another triumph when on 18th March, 1891, a Welsh Liberal colleague, Bowen Rowlands, introduced a Welsh Local Veto Bill. The Temperance movement had at that time a number of supporters on both sides of the House, and the Government took off the Whips and allowed a free vote. Lloyd George spoke with great effect, swinging over some of the Tory members, and the Second Reading was carried by a majority of six! It was a startling and improbable success. Needless to say, the Bill got no further. Derby Day was allotted for its Committee Stage, and on that day the House adjourned according to old custom for the members to exercise their Local Option at Epsom.

By the time he had reached his second year as a Member of Parliament Lloyd George possessed the same dexterous mastery of its rules of procedure, and of the uses to which they could be put, as he had earlier won over the intricacies of the English legal system and the conduct of the courts. (The advice he gave in later life to all young members in whom he was interested was *first of all* to master the rules of procedure of the House.) In the closing session of his first Parliament, 1891-2, he applied this skill with brilliant effect to harry the Government.

The measure against which he brought his tactics to bear was the Clergy Discipline (Immorality) Bill. Its aim of strengthening the hands of bishops to remove unworthy priests was wholly admirable. But since Lloyd George opposed on principle the existence of a State-established Church, he regarded legislation for its benefit as fair game. The fact that Gladstone, his Party leader, strongly supported the Bill made not the slightest difference to him. He rallied round him three other Nonconformist Welsh M.P.s, Sam Evans, Tom Ellis and D. A. Thomas, and between them this group fought the measure clause by clause and line by line. The Irish members had established a reputation for obstruction. The Welsh outdid them in the art. The first three sessions of the Committee stage ended without even the first clause being passed.

Gladstone was furious. He got himself put on the Committee in order to bring his rebellious followers to heel. That only made matters worse, for his lengthy counter-arguments to Lloyd George's incessant speeches and amendments still further prolonged the debates. Lloyd George had an immense admiration for Gladstone, never keener than when the G.O.M. was trying to pulverize him, but he was quite unsubdued. There was something pathetic about the spectacle of the magnificent old Churchman pleading, rebuking, denouncing the brilliant young opponent in

his own Party, and at last glaring helplessly at him as he slashed and tore at the Bill. It was no game for Gladstone, whose devout heart was given to the measure. But then, it was something more than a game for L.G. He too was battling for his religious beliefs.

Parliament was dissolved on 28th June, 1892, and Lloyd George had to fight his first re-election campaign. The Tories regarded his constituency as properly theirs, and had taken steps to secure its return to the fold and the defeat of the troublesome Welsh lawyer by getting Sir John Puleston, as a distinguished Welshman, to undertake its recapture. To ensure his victory Puleston had been made Constable of Caernarvon Castle, a post which gave him very considerable local influence. Puleston observed no Queensberry rules in his fighting. When speaking for Nanney at the 1890 election he had distinguished himself by scurrilous personal abuse of Lloyd George. During the following period Lloyd George worked hard to secure certain benefits for his constituents; among them, a concession for the Conway mussel fishers, and a reduction of the royalties on the Nantlle quarries. In each case, after he had brought months of hard campaigning to success, Puleston heard privately that the concessions were to be given, slipped round to the Government offices concerned to obtain confirmation, and then promptly announced in Caernarvonshire that he had himself gained these boons for the people!

But the Liberal member for the Boroughs had also not been idle. He had been constant in visiting his constituency and in making great speeches there on his favourite themes. He had developed the Party organization, and with characteristic farsightedness he had secured a newspaper backing by setting up in Caernarvon the Welsh National Press Co. Ltd., which in January 1892 acquired a series of Welsh and English papers, including *Y Genedl Cymreig*, a journal with the largest circulation in the vernacular in Wales; *Y Werin*, a Labour paper; and *The North Wales Observer and Express*. He was himself a frequent contributor to these papers, especially to the *Genedl*, whose readers eagerly looked forward to his articles.

Lloyd George never made the mistake of undervaluing the importance of the Press. Throughout his career he was careful to maintain excellent relations with it, alike from policy and because he had a genuine esteem for the journalistic profession. He had been a free-lance journalist himself from the time of his first "Brutus" letters, and during his earlier years at Westminster, when funds were low and it was far from easy to maintain himself and his growing family, he earned many a welcome guinea by articles for the *Manchester Guardian*. In this 1892 election his North Wales papers fought powerfully for him, and did much to redress the balance against Caernarvon Castle.

Sir John Puleston, threshing round for some means of discrediting his

opponent, asserted that Gladstone had condemned Lloyd George's attacks on the Clergy Discipline Bill as being insincere. One of Lloyd George's supporters promptly wrote off to Gladstone, who answered:

"Dear Sir,

"I lost no time in replying to your letter. Judging therefrom, I find that Sir John Puleston makes a bold and broad assertion, but does not cite any word of mine to sustain it. Under these circumstances, his statements stand as a mere opinion, and wholly want a basis in fact. I gave no opinion whatever on the conduct of Mr. Lloyd George, nor had I title or occasion to give any. Perhaps I shall give the best answer to the essence of your letter by saying that, if I were an elector for the Caernarvon Boroughs, I should vote against Sir J. Puleston and in favour of Mr. Lloyd George.

"I remain, dear Sir, your very faithful servant,

"W. E. GLADSTONE."

Another canard which was diligently circulated by the Primrose Dames supporting Puleston was that Lloyd George had refused to rise to the toast of "The Queen" at a Mansion House banquet. The charge was false, and was given the lie by those who had been with Lloyd George on the occasion; but that did not stop its repetition, and excited Tories threw a blazing torch into the carriage in which L.G. and his wife were driving through Bangor. It knocked off his hat and fell in her lap; but he swiftly tossed it away and beat out the flames of her dress. Even in these very early days Lloyd George suffered incessantly from calumny and slander; and the malicious falsehoods and misrepresentations circulated about him by his enemies persistently recurred throughout his political career.

On polling day, 14th July, 1892, the battle ended in a second victory for the Liberal candidate, this time with a majority of 196. Scenes of jubilation followed, surpassing even those of his first success. But passions ran so high that a torchlight procession of exultant Liberals in Bangor that evening was attacked by a mob of exasperated Conservatives, who tore down the Liberal banner. A free fight broke out and continued far into the night.

It was of course a bitter blow for the Tories. To defeat Lloyd George they had brought their star Welshman from Devonport, and as a result had lost Devonport without gaining the Boroughs. The *Pall Mall Gazette* pointed out that it was a verdict in favour of the "Young Wales" party and of Lloyd George's parliamentary tactics. "Though he has only been two years in the House," added the *Gazette*, "Mr. Lloyd George has acquired a notable mastery over the forms of the House, and in the matter

of piling up amendments, while evading the Speaker's pounce, he has shown that a Welshman may vie with an Irishman of the best period."

The 1892 General Election gave the Gladstonian Liberals and the Irish Nationalists a majority of 40 in the new Parliament, and in August the Tory Government was thrown out on a vote of No Confidence. Gladstone took office again for the last time—he was now in his eighty-third year—with the object of carrying Irish Home Rule.

He was dependent on the Celtic Fringe for his meagre majority. His following included 81 Irish Nationalists and 31 Welsh Liberals—for Wales was almost solidly Liberal, with 31 out of 34 seats. Gladstone could count on Irish support for his administration so long as Home Rule was its main concern. But the Welsh were a more elusive element, now that a strong current was setting in among them in favour of a Welsh Nationalist policy. He had had a taste of their independence and of their effective debating quality over the Clergy Discipline Bill. So he made a bid to secure their allegiance by offering Tom Ellis, the leader of the "Young Wales" movement, a post in the Government as Junior Whip.

It was a difficult decision for Ellis. He had agreed with the other leaders of the fighting Welsh group, Lloyd George, Sam Evans, and Herbert Lewis, that none of them would accept office without the consent of the others. Lloyd George viewed the offer with dismay, for his aim was to build up all the Welsh members into an independent Welsh party, fighting for a Welsh Nationalist programme. The Cymru Fydd which Tom Ellis had started and L.G. had enthusiastically taken up was making great headway. Associations were being formed by young Welshmen up and down the country, and the strong body of Welsh members in the House might, so it seemed to him, become a lever to raise their programme into practical legislation. Yet neither he nor his colleagues were disposed to veto acceptance of the offered post. Tom Ellis himself hesitated for some time. But with all his evangelistic zeal for Cymru Fydd he was essentially a gentle spirit—the St. John of the movement, as Lloyd George was its St. Paul—and he ultimately yielded to Gladstone's pressure and took office. In retrospect that act can be seen as the first of a series of blows to the Welsh Nationalist movement, by which it was ultimately shattered.

Lloyd George was thus left in the position of leader of those among the Welsh members who accepted his ideal of an Independent Welsh National Party, and during the next few years he worked and fought hard to realize this ideal in Parliament and in Wales. In Parliament he concentrated on the claim for priority for Welsh Disestablishment in the legislative programme. In the Principality he strove to weld the separate Liberal Federations into a unified Welsh National Council.

In its contents his political creed was that of a Left-wing Liberal, and

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he zealously advocated radical social reforms: abolition of sweated labour, shorter hours of work, better education, recognition of trade unions. He saw no necessity for the new movement to establish a Labour Party, then being advocated by Keir Hardie, whose cloth cap appeared at St. Stephens after the 1892 election.

"I cannot understand," he told an audience of quarrymen at Bethesda on 28th October, 1892, "why there should be any necessity for a separate Labour Party at all. As those interested in Labour questions compose the overwhelming majority of the electorate, they have only to express their views clearly, and take the simple course of joining Liberal Associations, and then select candidates who fairly represent their views. The great subjects which have been inscribed on the Liberal programme are of none the less interest to Labour that they are championed by an officially recognized party in the State."

But while his general creed was that of a Radical, his supreme aim at this time was to carry Welsh reforms, preferably by means of securing a measure of Welsh self-government within a Federal System. As a Welsh Home Ruler he supported the Irish demand for Home Rule, though with some misgivings. For he would have preferred a general measure of local self-government for each of the four parts of the United Kingdom to a piecemeal grant made to one part at a time, and as a Protestant he was somewhat uneasy about the danger of handing over his fellow Protestants in Ulster to Roman Catholic rule.

Gladstone was characteristically bending all his giant energies to the Home Rule problem. Whatever he took in hand was to him for the time being the supreme and only matter of importance. Lloyd George accepted the priority of Ireland, but insisted that Wales must come next. The Welsh members, he threatened, would not support a Liberal Ministry, however illustrious its head, unless it pledged itself to concede to Wales those great measures of reform upon which Wales had set her heart.

The Home Rule Bill was duly introduced. Lloyd George took no part in the debates on it. He supported it in principle, but wanted it polished off as quickly as possible in order to get ahead with Welsh Disestablishment. Anyhow, he knew that the Lords were sure to throw it out if it went up to them. In an effort to placate him and his Welsh group, Asquith, the Home Secretary, introduced a Suspensory Bill on 23rd February, 1893, to stop the creation of any new vested interests in Welsh Church dignities pending the introduction of a Disestablishment measure. Lloyd George welcomed this Bill, and publicly announced that he and his colleagues, in what the *Morning Leader* called the "Forward" Group of Welsh members, would insist on it being given precedence over

everything except Home Rule and a simple Registration Bill. The trouble was that the Liberals had put out in 1891 what was known as the "Newcastle Programme" of projected reforms—a formidable list of proposals—and were now overloading their time-table with Bills. Only a few of these ever got as far as the House of Lords, where most of the survivors were massacred. The Home Rule Bill, after a long obstruction by Joseph Chamberlain in the Commons, was thrown out by the Lords. An Employers' Liability Bill was so mutilated in the Upper Chamber that the Government dropped it. The Parish Councils Bill did eventually pass, after much travelling to and fro between the Houses. But the Government's majority was small; the Opposition was tenacious and persistent; so most of the measures fell by the way.

Lloyd George campaigned eagerly for the Suspensory Bill, addressing meetings up and down the country in speeches which must have been rarely entertaining to his hearers. He had by now developed a mastery over an audience such as a great conductor has over his orchestra. He could play upon them; whip them to enthusiasm or dissolve them in laughter. From the first few sentences he would have them in the hollow of his hand and hold them in chuckling delight as he tore the arguments of opponents to tatters and turned their leaders into figures of ridicule. But all his efforts were unavailing. The Suspensory Bill was among the measures which there was no time to pass during the crowded session.

At the beginning of March 1894 Gladstone resigned. He was over 84; but it was not so much age as the injury caused by a missile that had struck him in the face when driving through Liverpool which caused his health to fail and led to his resignation, and, four years later, to his death. In his farewell speech in the House on 1st March he bequeathed to his followers the task of abolishing the veto of the House of Lords. Seventeen years later Asquith and Lloyd George carried out that charge.

With Gladstone's departure, Lloyd George became an open rebel. Lord Rosebery inherited the Premiership, and he failed to satisfy the Welsh Forward Group as to his zeal for Welsh Disestablishment. They demanded a pledge that it should be enacted in 1894, even if this involved an autumn session. The pledge was not forthcoming, and four of them—Lloyd George, D. A. Thomas, Herbert Lewis and Frank Edwards—thereupon refused the Liberal Whip, despite the fact that their former colleague, Tom Ellis, was now Chief Whip.

They carried out a whirlwind campaign in Wales to justify their revolt. After Lloyd George had addressed a big meeting in Caernarvon and explained his reasons for his action, a resolution was carried, with but one dissident, expressing cordial approval of his attitude and pledging support for any further action he might take in furtherance of his policy.

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He received the same support at meetings in the other Boroughs, and his three allies also gained the approval of their constituencies.

The other Welsh members were not prepared to carry their discontent so far; but the Government, mindful of its slender majority, introduced a Welsh Disestablishment Bill on 26th April. Lloyd George was far from satisfied, either with the terms of the Bill or with the assurances given of its early passage. He criticized the measure severely in the First Reading debate, and in his speeches in Wales; but still more severely did he criticize the Government for its obvious intention to use the Bill merely as a sop to the Welsh—to give it a first and second reading and then leave it aside. Lord Rosebery, he declared to an audience at Cross Keys, Monmouthshire, had referred to the Welsh as “natives of the Principality” as if he were referring to a tribe of Wahabees in Central Africa.

“I have been reading how Stanley and his followers gave the natives empty jampots in exchange for supplies. The policy being pursued towards the ‘natives of the Principality’ is one of empty jampots. Others have the jam; we get the pots!”

He openly avowed that the policy of the four Welsh rebels was to found an independent Welsh Party, and at a meeting convened at Rhyl by the North Wales Liberal Federation, on 18th May, the four carried a resolution calling on the other 27 Welsh Liberal members to join in their revolt. A week later, however, these other members held a meeting at the House of Commons and pledged continued support to the Government.

Foiled in his attempt to bring the Welsh M.P.s into line, Lloyd George redoubled his efforts to build up a Welsh National movement in the country, under the banner of *Cymru Fydd*. During the remainder of 1894 he was campaigning for this object, founding branches of the Society in every town and village, and trying to get the Liberal Party in Wales to merge itself with the new movement.

With the North Wales Liberal Federation he made good progress. At a conference at Rhyl on 22nd October it agreed to appoint three members to consult with *Cymru Fydd* about amalgamation. At Cardiff the South Wales Liberal Federation also conferred with the *Cymru Fydd* League, and a joint committee met at Shrewsbury to prepare a draft scheme of amalgamation to be laid before a National Conference in the following spring. But now L.G.’s hopes received a shattering blow. D. A. Thomas (later Lord Rhondda), the wealthy Liberal coal-owner, one of the four Welsh rebels, took up arms against the fusion of Welsh Liberal organizations in the League. He was President of the South Wales Federation, and had no intention of letting it be merged and lost in the new body. On 2nd March, 1895, he delivered a speech at Cardiff

in which he made it quite clear that South Wales would not surrender to Cymru Fydd. In part he was no doubt moved by personal motives—an unwillingness to sacrifice the organization which he led and had done much to build up; in part it was the ancient rivalry and antagonism of North and South Wales coming to the surface. Yet another element in his opposition was the recent great expansion of industry and commerce in South Wales, which had brought a large influx of English workers and business men, and had developed close economic ties between South Wales and England. Thomas would work for Welsh Disestablishment and other Welsh reforms, but he would have no truck with Welsh Home Rule.

On 17th April, 1895, the National Federation met at Aberystwyth. Lloyd George designed that this Federation should amalgamate the North and South Wales Liberals together with Cymru Fydd. He succeeded in persuading the Northern body to accept this scheme, but the Southern, led by D. A. Thomas, held stubbornly aloof. On 22nd June a round-table conference was held at Llandrindod Wells between representatives of the South Wales Liberals and the new national organization, at which resolutions were adopted accepting the existence of the National Federation. But South Wales preserved the substantial independence of her own established organization.<sup>6</sup>

This was the beginning of a long and bitter conflict between Lloyd George and D. A. Thomas for the control of Welsh Liberalism. The fight dragged on until the beginning of the Boer War; but long before then it was clear that so far as South Wales was concerned, Thomas was the victor. There would be no united Wales for Lloyd George to lead; and if, as some suggested, he nursed dreams of becoming a Welsh Parnell, the opposition of D. A. Thomas made those dreams vain. Greatly to the benefit of Britain and the world, Lloyd George was driven in the next few years from the role of a Welsh leader to that of a British statesman.

## CHAPTER VI

### A BACK-BENCH LEADER

THE battle for Wales had hardly been joined before it had to be temporarily suspended for a General Election.

The Liberal Government, never very strong, had been badly shaken by the dissensions among its Welsh members. To placate them, the Disestablishment Bill was reintroduced and on 1st April, 1895, received its Second Reading. Lloyd George tried to strengthen its weaker features in Committee, and forced the Government to accept an amendment placing the control of the tithe in the hands of a Welsh National Council elected by the Welsh County Councils, instead of under a Commissioner appointed by the Crown. But just after this success, on 21st June, while he and several other of the Welsh M.P.s were absent unpaired at the round-table conference at Llandrindod Wells, the Government were defeated by a majority of seven in a snap division on an alleged shortage of cordite. Rosebery, glad of the excuse, resigned and Parliament was dissolved.

In the subsequent election the Liberal Party was in poor shape. Still impoverished through the loss of the Unionists, it was now rent by factions. The Welsh supporters were disgruntled and a section of the most active of them, led by Lloyd George, had for some time been in open revolt and trying to form an independent National Party. The extreme Left wing of the Party was beginning to favour the creation of a Labour Party that would concentrate on the industrial reforms in which the workers were specially interested, such as workmen's compensation, shorter hours, early closing, trade union recognition. Keir Hardie and John Burns had arrived in Parliament at the 1892 election, and in 1893 Keir Hardie founded the Independent Labour Party. The old lion, Gladstone, had finally retired, and the selection of Rosebery instead of Sir William Harcourt as his successor had created a good deal of bad feeling among Sir William's admirers. Altogether, Liberalism was heading for disaster, and disaster met it. The Tories and Unionists were returned at the July election with more than twice as many members as the Liberals, and with a clear majority of 152 over the combined Liberal and Irish Nationalist total.

In the Caernarvon Boroughs, Ellis Nanney took the field for a second time against Lloyd George. With the rising tide of Conservatism his chances looked good, for the constituency, then and always, contained a large and well-organized Tory vote. Besides, Lloyd George was now the

storm-centre of controversy, and some of his bitterest enemies were in his own party—men who disapproved of his efforts to form Welsh Liberals into a splinter group, and blamed him for the fall of the Government. Bryn Roberts, the Liberal member for South Caernarvonshire, publicly arraigned him in the Press.

But if there were many against him, large masses of his Welsh fellow-countrymen looked to him as the supreme embodiment of their national hopes and ideals, and rallied round him with a fanatical devotion bordering on idolatry. He had worked tirelessly and successfully for his constituents, gaining material concessions for fishermen, quarrymen and peasants from successive governments, and their faith in him was unbounded. The story has often been told of the Englishman who talked with a Caernarvonshire peasant, and grew irritated at hearing the praises of Lloyd George, until he finally burst out with the protest; "You talk as if your Lloyd George could do everything! He's not God Almighty!" "Ah, but he's young yet!" retorted the Welshman.

The election campaign was fiercely fought; but, in spite of all the attacks upon him, Lloyd George was again victorious. When the result of the poll was announced on 22nd July, his majority of 194 over Ellis Nanney was only two less than in the 1892 contest. This was the more remarkable because he had not confined himself to his own struggle, but both before and after the Boroughs polled he was speaking up and down Wales on behalf of his fellow Liberal candidates. Indeed, he overworked his magnificent constitution, and four days after his own victory he collapsed when speaking at Amlwch on behalf of Ellis Griffith. General Elections at that time used to be spread over several weeks.

In the new Parliament, Lloyd George enjoyed the liberty of a free-lance. The Liberals were in opposition, and he himself was semi-detached even from them. Especially during the first two years, he was concentrating his chief efforts not on the advancement of official Liberalism, but on the vain hope of constructing a Welsh National Party, Liberal indeed in its main tenets, but independent of English Liberalism.

He realized that even if the Disestablishment Bill had won through the Commons it would have shared the fate of the Home Rule Bill, and have been killed by the Lords. To achieve the reforms dearest to him, either the House of Lords veto must be abolished or a measure of Welsh Home Rule obtained, with powers to legislate in a Welsh Parliament on purely Welsh affairs. This alternative seemed to him at that time the more hopeful line of approach. In an article which he wrote for the November 1895 number of *Young Wales*—a monthly magazine of the Cymru Fydd, edited by John Hugh Edwards—he argued forcibly for this policy, maintaining that a measure of Home Rule all round was the only way to get either Irish Home Rule or Welsh Disestablishment carried into law.

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This violently controversial proposal got a very mixed reception from Welsh and English Liberals, and the icy disapproval of the Irish, who wanted their own Home Rule to take precedence of everything else.

Despite the collapse of the Party elsewhere in the 1895 election, Wales had remained staunchly Liberal, and Lloyd George set himself afresh to unite Welsh Liberalism with Cymru Fydd in his National League. At the Aberystwyth Convention he had carried the North Wales Federation. But the South Welsh, who a decade earlier had been far more eager than their northern colleagues in the cause of Welsh Nationalism, had now been brought by D. A. Thomas to oppose the notion. The big industrial and commercial interests represented by Thomas and his friends were afraid that any division from England would hamper their trade and turn them into mulch kine for costly schemes of Welsh development. The English workers and traders whom their industries had drawn into South Wales were equally unsympathetic to the cry of "Wales for the Welsh!"

The opposition which Thomas and his officials organized to Lloyd George reached its climax at the annual meetings of the South Wales Liberal Federation at Newport on 16th January, 1896. The Federation officers were at pains to disallow the delegations of certain of the counties known to favour the Lloyd George policy, and to bring big delegations from those opposed to it. Lloyd George himself attended, having been appointed as one of their delegates by no fewer than four of the affiliated associations. He succeeded in carrying a resolution to appoint a paid secretary for the National Federation—an essential step if it was to become a really active body and not merely a paper one. But he was stopped by the chairman from speaking to a motion by the Rev. Elvet Lewis, and the Conference carried a resolution that he should not be heard!

For a Welsh audience formally to refuse a hearing to Lloyd George, who was by far the most popular speaker and most vigorous leader in the Principality, was an all-but-incredible rebuff. It showed how ruthless and unbridled was the antagonism of D. A. Thomas and his colleagues to L.G.'s policy. L.G.'s friends could hold an indignant meeting of protest, but they could not shake the Federation out of its attitude of hostility.

That vote of the Newport Conference was a determining factor of crucial importance in Lloyd George's career. Until then he had been concentrating all his plans upon the achievement of specifically Welsh reforms. While he was a Liberal, his Liberalism was designed for Welsh consumption. His aim at Westminster was to organize the Welsh to fight for Welsh affairs and if possible to win a measure of Welsh autonomy. But by 1896 he faced failure in this project. Only a minority of the Welsh M.P.s approved the idea of becoming an independent group,

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distinct from the main body of the Liberal Party. Their chief figure, Tom Ellis, was the Liberal Whip. And L.G.'s attempt to unite North and South Wales Liberals in a single organization, rallying round the *Cymru Fydd*, was shattered by D. A. Thomas and his supporters. The Newport vote was its death sentence.

Surprise has sometimes been expressed that Lloyd George, after having been so fervid a protagonist of Welsh Nationalism in his early political career, should later on have moved so far away from it that he viewed with disfavour the appearance of Welsh Nationalist candidates in parliamentary electoral contests. But the truth is that he had learned by hard experience that Welsh Nationalism was a vain dream. Wales did not, as a whole, want it, and would not have it. What he could not achieve in the full vigour of his young manhood, when the whole Principality was at his feet; when he was aided by a band of the most renowned of Welsh political leaders and by a nation-wide organization of Welsh youth, and borne forward by the rising tide of Welsh national sentiment; that lost battle could not be won by a handful of little men with no organization and no general Welsh backing. Later, too, he came to see that there was substance behind D. A. Thomas's opposition. Wales is in fact too closely interdependent economically with England for any sharp separation to be desirable in administration and policy.

The hopelessness of the struggle was not immediately evident to him after the Newport vote, and during the rest of the 'nineties he kept up his fight for Welsh unity. But he saw clearly enough that the prospect of gaining Welsh reforms through Welsh Home Rule had grown remote, and, with the adaptability which always characterized him throughout his career, he looked round for other means of gaining his objects. Welsh Nationalism was after all not so much an end as a means to an end—the winning of religious freedom and educational and social progress for Wales. These objects were also written into the programme of official Liberalism. He turned back to the official Liberal Party as the instrument whereby to gain them.

He never lost his devotion to the interests of Wales and his zeal for Welsh reforms, but as he gradually became a British and no longer an exclusively Welsh politician he found himself surveying a wider horizon. What he had sought for Wales he now sought for the United Kingdom. The Newport vote was an explosion which, instead of shattering him, drove him up to greater heights of vision and public service.

One of Lloyd George's most notable qualities was the lucidity with which he distinguished between means and ends. He held fast by his ends—the practical objectives for which he was working. He was never tied to means. If one line of approach failed, he could drop it and take another. People of shorter vision or stiffer mental joints were sometimes

disconcerted by this flexibility, and cried out on his lack of principle. They failed to see how steadfastly he was pursuing his ultimate purpose, whatever method he might try or discard on the way to it.

"I don't hit a very long ball," he remarked once in later life, when discussing golf with a friend, "but I generally keep straight down the centre of the fairway." And he added ruminatively, "When people come to look back on my political course, I think they'll find that there, too, I kept straight down the centre of the fairway!"

If his dream of a united Wales had been shattered, there remained the Parliament at Westminster, and Lloyd George threw himself into its affairs with intenser concentration.

As a member of the Opposition he could give free rein to his natural pugnacity. He was not long in finding an object to attack. The Tory Government, which had inherited a handsome surplus from its Liberal predecessor, brought in an Agricultural Rates Bill to utilize one-and-a-half millions in relieving agricultural land of half its rates. Ostensibly this was to assist the depressed farmer; but Lloyd George correctly foretold that its benefits would eventually accrue to the landowner in the higher rents he could charge. He calculated that the members of the Tory administration would personally benefit to the tune of £60,000 a year from the measure, at the expense of the tax-paying public. This gave him a theme after his own heart. If the landlord wanted to help the farmer, he declared, he should lower his rent, which was a far heavier burden than rates. Instead of that, the landlords, having—so he said—worked the poor farmer clean out, were now seeking to bleed others.

His attack on the Government in the Second Reading debate was the event of the evening, far outshining the efforts of the Front Opposition Bench. He kept up the fight all through the Committee stage, moving amendment after amendment. His experience as a lawyer had given him a thorough background knowledge of the land system, and his attacks were as resourceful as his energy was indefatigable. "Has Lloyd George been speaking all the morning?" wrote a critic in the *Western Mail*, echoing the lobby gossip. "Lloyd George speaking? Lloyd George still speaking? Hasn't anyone else but Lloyd George spoken?" Though only a back-bencher, he was the real leader of the Opposition in these debates. In fact, the great bulk of the opposition was provided by him.

Things came to a climax in the debate on Clause Four. The House was dragging wearily through an all-night sitting, thanks to the persistence of Lloyd George and his allies; and Arthur Balfour, the Conservative leader in the Commons, decided to apply the closure. Lloyd George refused to leave the Chamber when the division was being taken, and Herbert Lewis and three of the Irish members supported him. His own defence of his action was subsequently given to his constituents as follows:

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"Five minutes before the fateful division, I had been talking to the Chairman respecting the amendments to Clause 4. I called his attention to the fact that the Clause, as it stood, was nonsense. It was not only illogical, but ungrammatical, and when I privately called the Chairman's attention to it, he said that I was quite right and that the Clause as it stood had no sense. 'Then, Mr. Chairman,' I said, 'I shall move an amendment.' 'Very well,' he replied, 'but don't make a long speech about it.' After this understanding with the Chairman, you can understand my surprise to hear him, a few minutes afterwards, accept the whole Clause in its unamended form as part of the Bill."

This was of course a lawyer's plea. One does not defy the Chair because someone else's Bill is illogical or ungrammatical. It was the meaning rather than the grammar of the Clause to which Lloyd George furiously objected, even to the extent of defying the Speaker. When he refused to quit the Chamber the division had to be suspended and the House re-formed. Then the Speaker called on him to say whether he persisted in his refusal. "I decline to go," said L.G., "as a protest against the action of the Government in closing debate without sufficient discussion!" Herbert Lewis, similarly challenged, stuttered indignantly, "I regard this Bill as organized robbery!" They and the three Irish members, Dillon, Sullivan and Tanner, were solemnly suspended for a week.

Much they cared! The two Welshmen went off to Criccieth for their holiday, where they were treated as heroes and overwhelmed with letters and telegrams of congratulation from all over the country and from members of all Parties. Lloyd George had a busy time addressing enthusiastic meetings in the Boroughs and supporting the Liberal candidate at a by-election in Frome. His suspension did him no harm in the Liberal Party. On the contrary, it was regarded as a proof of his courage and sincerity. A Liverpool paper which had been publishing bitter attacks on him swung round to acknowledge frankly his services to the Party, and Sir William Harcourt paid public tribute to his work when speaking on the Third Reading of the Agricultural Rates Bill, while the *Westminster Gazette* averred that no words of praise could be too strong for what Mr. Lloyd George had done. The Parliamentary correspondent of the *Daily Chronicle* said, "Of all the young men on the Liberal side, I should certainly say that Mr. Lloyd George has made the greatest mark of the session." The *Observer* acknowledged that "both on the Education Bill and on the English Rating Bill he disclosed a perfect mastery of the subject, a readiness of force and resource in debate much more nearly resembling the gifts of Mr. Tim Healy than the earlier stages of his career recalled the manner of Mr. Parnell".

In short, Lloyd George had by the summer of 1896 established a

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reputation, not merely as an enthusiastic Welsh Nationalist or a magnetic popular orator, but as a first-class Parliamentarian with a real mastery of procedure, a keen eye for the vital issue, and an impressive knowledge of legal problems. He was recognized as a rising star of the Liberal Party.

He was still, of course, a back-bencher. It would be nearly another ten years before he attained a ministerial post and salary. Meantime, he was mainly dependent on his earnings from the law. During parliamentary vacations he resumed his legal practice in Portmadoc, where his brother William, the junior partner of the firm of Lloyd George and George, heroically did the work of two while the House was sitting. In addition, he picked up a certain amount of legal work in London, especially in connection with Private Bills, and gradually began to build up a London practice. There were also his earnings from occasional articles in the papers, and receipts from his shares in the Welsh newspaper ventures he had promoted. His supporters in the Boroughs raised the money to meet his election expenses. Fortunately, too, his wife's parents were well-to-do.

He needed all he could make, for his responsibilities had been steadily increasing. Richard, his eldest son, was born on 15th February, 1889, just over a year after his marriage. On 2nd August, 1890, nearly four months after his first election to Parliament, came his eldest daughter, Mair Eiluned. Olwen Elizabeth, his second daughter, was born on 3rd April, 1892, and on 4th December, 1894, his second son, Gwilym, arrived. So he now had to maintain a wife and a family of four young children. Megan was born later, on 22nd April, 1902.

On his first arrival in London in 1890, he had rented from his colleague Sam Evans some rooms for the session in Essex Court, in the Temple. Next year, he and his wife secured a flat in Verulam Buildings, Gray's Inn, where they could have their children with them—though the children spent much of their time at Criccieth, where their Aunt Mary, Lloyd George's sister, was always ready to devote herself to them. Indeed, the bulk of young Dick's early boyhood was passed in the care of his great-uncle, Richard Lloyd. In 1893 the Lloyd Georges moved to a flat in Palace Mansions, Kensington. When up in North Wales they used at first to stay with Mrs. Lloyd George's parents, the Owens of Mynydd Ednyfed, but presently Richard Owen built a pair of houses, Llys Owen and Brynawelon, for himself and the Lloyd Georges.

While the children were very young Mrs. Lloyd George spent (rather naturally) a great part of her time in Criccieth, which she much preferred to London. L.G. often was left to fend for himself for long stretches in the London flat and fared rather badly! The Herbert Lewises at one of these times took pity on him and insisted upon bringing him to their home to live. When they went later to live at Wandsworth Mrs. Lloyd George would spend all the school holidays in Wales with the children.

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Lloyd George often complained that he was badly neglected during this period. It was the old story of conflicting loyalties to husband and children—and his wife chose the children. It must be admitted that L.G. was a wholetime job! To look after the children *and* L.G. was an almost impossible task.

Lloyd George was devoted to his children, though he had his favourites—Mair (most of all) and Gwilym, and afterwards Megan. When Gwilym was about two and was very ill with bronchitis his father was the only one who could persuade him to take his medicine (by showing him the works of his watch) and he had to take time off during a very busy period in the House of Commons for this purpose.

On 19th June, 1896, Lloyd George's mother, Elizabeth, died in her seventieth year. Her health had been failing for some time. Serenely competent in the home, she had diligently and selflessly devoted her life to the care of her family, especially of her brilliant elder boy, whose successes she followed with quiet pride. But she had no strong interest of her own in the political matters that occupied him. Like many other good women, she was sincerely and somewhat narrowly pious. Is it not indeed in all lands and all ages the particular task of women to hold fast by the traditions and conventions of religion and the simple sanctities of home and family life? It was with his uncle, Richard Lloyd, rather than with his mother that David shared his political ideals and enthusiasms, and it would be hard to overrate the dominating influence which the older man exercised over the younger during those early years of development and adventure. The two corresponded daily. Lloyd George submitted to his uncle for criticism the notes of any speeches he was preparing and sought his advice about his plans for political strategy. The content and the limitations of his political notions alike derived from his uncle.

Richard Lloyd was an original thinker. Neither in religion nor in politics did he meekly accept his dogmas ready-made, but thought out his creed for himself. His nephew took after him in this. Lloyd George's first question about some notion which entered his mind was not whether it squared with the orthodoxies of his Party, but whether it struck him as sensible and beneficial—an attitude which from time to time got him into trouble with the Pharisees of Liberalism. Thus in the debate on the Budget on 11th May, 1896, he proposed that the Tea Duty should not be levied on Colonial produce. From the Liberal standpoint, to turn a revenue duty into a preferential tariff was heresy, and his Liberal colleagues indulgently assumed that he merely advanced the notion to harass the Government. Maybe that was—in part at least—his purpose. But so was a free breakfast table, and he would not, perhaps, have minded a bit of heresy if it lessened the amount of taxation levied on poor people's food.

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When Parliament rose in August 1896 for the summer recess, Lloyd George took a new forward step in his cultural development. He set out with his colleague, Herbert Lewis, on a trip to the Argentine.

This was his first trip abroad. Hitherto his experience had been limited to Great Britain. In that limitation lurked the danger of parochialism. "What do they know of England who only England know?" asks Kipling, with some reason. The horizon of a Welsh village is inevitably limited. London commands a wider view, but there his attention had been mainly concentrated on his duties at Westminster, and the political gossip and intrigues which fill life at St. Stephens are not very different from those of a village.

The friends sailed on 21st August for Buenos Aires in the R.M.S. *Clyde*. The weather was favourable and the voyage calm, and their safe arrival at their first transatlantic port, Pernambuco, was reported on 4th September. At Buenos Aires they were royally entertained, and spent some days travelling in the tropical scenery of the Cordoba mountains. They were unable to fulfil their original intention of visiting the Welsh colony of Patagonia, but met the doyen of the colony, Lewis Jones, and also the Spanish Governor of that region, who gave them an amusing account of the puzzling ways of his Cymric subjects, who furiously refused to be called English, and with equal fury insisted that they were British subjects.

On his return home Lloyd George made yet another effort to bring about Welsh Liberal unity. On 6th January, 1897, he induced a conference of Flintshire and Denbighshire Liberals to accept a motion calling on the Welsh Parliamentary Party to convene a conference for reorganizing the Liberal forces in Wales. The Welsh M.P.s met on 30th March and accepted this commission. But D. A. Thomas and his powerful group in the South Wales Federation maintained their opposition. Thomas resigned his membership of the Welsh Parliamentary Party and his post as President of the South Wales Liberal Federation in protest against Lloyd George's policy.

After various delays the National Convention proposed by the Northern Liberals was held in Cardiff on 4th February, 1898; and as its opponents mainly boycotted it, it achieved a superficial appearance of unanimity and approved a scheme for a National Council. This Council held its first meetings at Llandrindod Wells on 5th August, and wrote Home Rule for Wales into its programme, along with Disestablishment, Temperance Reform and Land Reform.

But the fragile young plant encountered a succession of frosts and storms. Its President, the veteran Welsh Nationalist, Thomas Gee, died in November. In the following April Tom Ellis, the pride and hope of Wales, died untimely. Although as Chief Liberal Whip he had latterly

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been unable to take an active part in the struggle for Welsh Nationalism, he had steadily supported Lloyd George so far as his official position allowed, and his passing robbed the movement of one of its most helpful influences. The South Wales Federation held sullenly aloof, insisting that the National Council should be no more than a meeting-ground for the autonomous regional Federations. When the South African War broke out in the autumn of 1899 it wrote "Finis" to an unmistakable failure.

If Lloyd George was unable to draw the Welsh Liberals into a United Front, he also experienced a setback among the Welsh members. Their titular leader, Sir George Osborne Morgan, died in August 1897, and the group elected a new chairman on 13th February, 1898. Their choice fell on Alfred Thomas. True, an amendment to appoint Lloyd George was moved by Reginald McKenna and seconded by Herbert Lewis, but Lloyd George declined to split the group over the personal issue, and refused to stand. He was and had been for some time the real leader of the Welsh members, but without official title. The fact that he was passed over for the chairmanship no doubt helped to weaken his exclusive preoccupation with Welsh affairs.

During those three years, 1896-9, the seed which Lloyd George sowed in his efforts to rally and unite Welsh Liberalism fell in stony places. It had no deepness of earth, and sprang up only to wither. But at Westminster he was building up a reputation as the most virile and effectual fighter among the Liberal members. The Liberal Party was drifting through rough seas. After Gladstone's retirement in 1894 Lord Rosebery had led it for a short time, and when he resigned in October 1896 no one was appointed in his place, though Sir William Harcourt, as leader of the Liberals in the Commons, was the acting head of the Party. But its members were split by inner dissensions and faction feuds between the Liberal Imperialists who looked still to Rosebery, and the Radical wing that supported Harcourt. Weary of the squabbles, Harcourt threw in his hand in December 1898 over the Fashoda incident, and his colleague John Morley withdrew with him. On 6th February, 1899, the Liberal members elected Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as a neutral figure-head who might be accepted by both wings of the Party. He had no distinct personal following, and scoffers dubbed him a "man of straw", a dummy leader. Therein they did him less than justice. If he had no glittering intellectual brilliance he had sound judgment, a stubborn strength of character, and profound honesty and sincerity. He inspired no awe, but he won the confidence and affection of friend and foe.

During the years from 1896 to 1899, however, the Party was disheartened and incoherent, lacking clear and confident leadership from its front bench, whose occupants distrusted one another and were rent by intrigues. They would have made a very poor showing as an Opposi-

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tion, were it not that among their back-benchers they had a member who knew his own mind, was a master of his subject, had a razor-keen intellect, exhaustless energy and a quite inordinate store of pugnacity. Lloyd George supplied, in fact, the main element of Liberal opposition. He planned and led the attacks on the Government's activities.

The causes he advocated were, of course, those which he had originally desired for Wales: religious liberty; temperance reform; abolition of the tyrannous powers of landlords; improved education; better conditions for the working classes. But when he fought on these issues in the Imperial Parliament, with reference to national legislation, he was led inevitably to advocate them, not just for Wales, but for the whole country. Almost imperceptibly he became a national and not a regional politician.

On 8th March, 1899, the *Daily Telegraph*, reporting a parliamentary debate on a motion by Lloyd George attacking the Church schools, said:

"Mr. Lloyd George is one of the strong and constant representatives of dissent in the House. A Welsh member, with all the intense and ardent convictions of Welshmen against the Church, he is always ready to lead an assault upon any of the defences of the Church. A teetotaller, an active and energetic spirit, with a slight frame and under middle height, Mr. Lloyd George is one of those who retain boyishness of looks and appearances generally, in spite of the fact that he is well on towards the forties, and has been a practising solicitor for years. Clear, intense in conviction, he puts his case well. . . ."

The *Telegraph* noted, however, that the House was listless and sleepy, incapable of being roused even by L.G.'s fiery eloquence, and that only the loyalty of his Nonconformist backers saved it from being counted out—a common experience at that time for motions. During those years it was, in fact, a dull, apathetic assembly—"the child of national exhaustion, of a self-protective cynicism, of class interests", as a writer in the *Westminster Gazette* described it, adding that in it an appeal to a generous sentiment would fall dead, whereas a ribald joke evoked the ready laugh. It was a most difficult audience for one to address who burned with genuine zeal and voiced passionate convictions of a kind which his hearers regarded with supercilious contempt. Lloyd George's success—for he was markedly successful in debate in his battles against the Agricultural Rating Bill and the Voluntary Schools Bill—was due partly to his thorough grasp of his subject and his mastery of parliamentary technique, and partly to the rapier thrust of his wit that put his would-be mockers on the defensive and turned the laugh against them. The London Correspondent of the *Liverpool Mercury* wrote on 17th July, 1899, of a debate in the House:

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"One of the finest speeches in the second reading debate, and a much more impressive speech than Mr. Asquith's, came from Mr. Lloyd George. It was a classic, and far and away transcends everything he has yet done. It was logical in arrangement, complete in argument, earnest in spirit, epigrammatic, and literally coruscated with brilliant and effective points. I do not recollect a speech in the House from any Welsh member which approached it in fertility of allusion and in eloquence."

He found far more congenial audiences at public meetings about the country, where he was in ever-growing demand. No important party gathering or by-election was complete without an address from him. The pressure of these engagements left him very little time to keep up his legal practice in Portmadoc, and as his London practice was growing he invited his friend Arthur Rhys Roberts, a Newport solicitor, to come and join him in developing it. In May 1897 they opened an office at 13 Walbrook, E.C., which they moved three years later to 63 Queen Victoria Street. When Parliament was in session Lloyd George would spend his mornings in the City at his office, and his afternoons and evenings at the House.

For a time he continued his partnership with his brother William George at Portmadoc, but had less and less time to devote to it, and presently handed over the Welsh practice entirely to his brother. On 20th May, 1898, the Welsh papers carried a rumour that he was proposing to give up "his pretty country residence, Brynawelon, at Criccieth, and reside permanently in London". The growth of his London practice was given as a reason for the change. The rumour was, nevertheless, ill-founded. A move was, however, made in 1899 from their Kensington flat to a house in Routh Road, Wandsworth Common. Lloyd George would often walk the whole way from Wandsworth to Westminster, and make the return journey also on foot after a late sitting. He never lost his fondness for walking.

The trip which he had made to the Argentine in 1896 awakened in him a liking for foreign travel, which he decided to gratify by taking other tours in subsequent summers. In April 1897 he made plans for a trip to South Africa, but pressure of his engagements stopped him from carrying out his intention. South Africa, however, was destined to play a vitally important part in the shaping of his career; for in October 1899, while he was taking a holiday in Canada, Britain plunged into the Boer War.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE "PRO-BOER"

THE South African War had a decisive effect upon Lloyd George's career. In its furnace his metal was tested and proved. By its close he had been remoulded as a national and international statesman. He stood forth, a man who, though at the time he was execrated by a large section of his fellows, was unmistakably a leader destined to play a dominating part in the political affairs of the country.

The South African War is ancient history now, and what was shameful in its launching and conduct has been nobly atoned for in the generosity of the settlement ultimately made; a settlement so satisfactory to the Boer leaders that it turned them into loyal friends and supporters of the British Commonwealth. But at the time it was a murky story, with much to disgust those few who were able to look, clear-eyed, at the facts, without being blinded by partisanship or swept off their balance by the tide of jingo excitement.

The circumstances which led up to the war can be very briefly sketched. The Cape of Good Hope had originally been colonized by Dutch farmers in 1651. During the Napoleonic wars the British occupied the Cape to keep it out of French hands, and eventually annexed it. In the following years British settlers filtered in to share the territory with the Dutch Boers. Many of the Dutch resented British rule, so in 1836-7 a body of them carried out the "Great Trek" northward from Cape Colony to establish the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. Here they found themselves constantly at war with the Kaffirs and Zulus. But what proved in the long run an even greater menace to their peace was the discovery in the late 'sixties of diamond mines and goldfields in the area where they had settled. These brought an influx of foreigners, alien in race and still more in outlook, bent on exploiting the new Eldorado.

The political status of the Republics was at the time not beyond question, since they were offshoots from British colonial territory. In 1871 the Colonial Office put forward a proposal to combine all the South African colonial territories, including the Boer Republics, in a South African Union. But unfortunately this was turned down by both colonists and Boers.

Fresh trouble broke out between the Boers and Kaffirs, which had to be cleared up by British forces, and in 1877 the British Government formally annexed the Boer Republics. Three years later the Boers revolted, and in 1881 defeated a small British force at Majuba Hill. Queen Victoria

thereupon insisted that Gladstone should stop the fighting and leave the Boers their independence, though she continued to regard herself as possessing suzerainty over the whole of South Africa.

There were, however, many who were not content with this position. Majuba rankled in the memories of the military. The Transvaal Government under its elderly President, Paul Kruger, was reactionary and lethargic, and its measures greatly irritated the cosmopolitan crowd of immigrant foreigners—Uitlanders, as they were called—who were exploiting the gold mines of Johannesburg. Cecil Rhodes, founder of the De Beers Mining Company, the dictator of British South Africa, was an intense Imperialist who dreamed of painting the map of Africa red, and was eager to bring the Boer Republics under British control. He became Prime Minister at the Cape in 1890, and pursued a steady policy of supporting the Uitlanders' claims. It was with his encouragement and backing that Dr. Jameson launched in 1895 his notorious "Raid" on Pretoria with the object of overthrowing by a bold coup the Boer Government and putting the British in control. The raid failed. Dr. Jameson was tried and sent to prison. Rhodes was severely censured and resigned his premiership, but continued to foster intrigues against the Boer Republics.

It was a complex situation. The older Boers wanted only to be left alone to farm. The Uitlanders had poured in for the gold and diamond mines until they outnumbered the Boers in the Transvaal, and Kruger's government, afraid of being swamped by these newcomers, maintained a franchise law which gave the right to vote for the main assembly only to those men who had been fourteen years resident in the country. But the younger and better educated Boers recognized that this policy of surly independence could not be permanently maintained. Boer and Briton were intermingled throughout South Africa. If Uitlanders now outnumbered Boers in the Transvaal, Boers were still in the majority in Cape Colony. The Union of the whole region, including the Republics, was ultimately inevitable, and the younger Boers would have acquiesced in it if safeguards for Dutch interests and rights were accorded. The situation clearly called for toleration and patience.

Rhodes and the big gold-mining firms of the Rand were not, however, interested in patience. They wanted to get rid of the restrictive laws which Kruger had imposed on their activities, such as the eight-hour day for miners (which was much in advance of British legislation), and the refusal to allow them to herd native labour into compounds at the mines, as was being done under British auspices at Kimberley. They protested against being heavily taxed for the benefit of the Transvaal, where their voting rights were so drastically limited. They pressed the British Government to use a strong hand to support their case. A very small effort, they

assured Joseph Chamberlain at the Colonial Office, would suffice to crush the Boer Government, which had few friends within the country, and none outside.

Four years earlier Chamberlain had seen clearly and declared emphatically that the attempt to unify South Africa by a war would be criminal folly. But now, persuaded that this plum was ripe for the picking, that a parade of force would bluff the Boers into surrender, and attracted by the prospect of making his tenure of the Colonial Office memorable by such a spectacular triumph, he sent to Kruger a list of drastic demands on behalf of the Uitlanders. After putting up a sullen resistance, the Boer President eventually agreed to most of these, including a shortening of the residence qualification for the franchise to five years. This disappointed those who were pressing Chamberlain for action. They wanted a conquest, not a compromise. Sir William Butler, who was appointed High Commissioner and Acting Governor of South Africa in 1898, tells in his autobiography how he found that Rhodes and his friends were making determined efforts by intrigue and propaganda to incite an outbreak of hostilities.

When Butler was ordered by the British Government to move troops up to the Transvaal frontier he refused, well knowing that so provocative a gesture would precipitate a war, and that the position he was instructed to occupy would be tactically untenable. He was recalled, and his successor carried out the manœuvre. This action, as Chamberlain and Rhodes had foreseen, forced the issue. On 11th October, 1899, Kruger sent an ultimatum to the British Government demanding the withdrawal of the troops, and when this was refused his own militia came across the frontier and sent the British flying, and the war was launched.

During this 1899 summer Lloyd George was aware of the growing strain in South Africa, and of the danger that war might result there. He deplored the prospect. The conditions did not appear to him to justify going to war, and he realized that a war would interfere with the progress of all the reforms on which he had set his heart. He had for long been advocating Old Age Pensions, and had been a member of a Select Committee appointed on 1st May to examine this question. The Committee had reported in favour of non-contributory pensions of 5s. to 7s. a week at the age of 65. A war, he knew, would wreck this scheme, and he rated the interests of the aged poor in Britain higher than those of the millionaire gold-mine proprietors on the Rand.

Since the attitude which he eventually adopted in face of the South African War brought him into the same camp with the pacifists and conscientious objectors, and resulted in the great majority of his fellow-countrymen regarding him for the next fourteen years as a genuine member of that group, it should be clearly stated that neither at this nor

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at any other time in his whole career was Lloyd George a pacifist in the sense of being a conscientious objector to fighting in any circumstances. He objected to needless war—as every humane and intelligent person, including great generals such as the Duke of Wellington, will always object—because of the misery and waste it entails; and for that reason he would seek all possible means of conciliation by which a just settlement of a dispute could be peaceably attained. He took a poor view of war as a method of reaching a just settlement, because it decides not which side is right, but only which side is the stronger. But a war to defend the right or to resist aggression had his full support. Himself by temperament the most pugnacious of men, he came of a highly pugnacious race. Give him a cause worth fighting for, and he enjoyed nothing better. It was never his lot to take a physical share in military combat, though his membership in youth of the Caernarvonshire Volunteers proved that he had no moral objection to it; but he spent his whole life fighting in the political arena, and in due course directed the affairs of the nation in the greatest war she had yet fought. Even in the South African War, to which he was opposed, he fought harder and took much bigger personal risks than did those politicians who supported it!

Nor did Lloyd George belong at any time to that rather prickly and dyspeptic set of people who are the friends of every country except their own, and instinctively take the other side when a dispute arises. His instinct was to take the weaker side, but this was allied to his passionate patriotism. His patriotism began with little Wales, and no pacifist qualm shadowed his reverence for his national heroes such as Llewellyn and Glendower, who had fought the Saxon on many a bloody field. It extended to Britain and the Empire, and if they had been menaced by Boer aggression he would have sprung to their defence. "There is nothing," he declared in 1891, "that can give a movement greater strength and vigour than that it should be animated with the spirit of patriotism." No one was openly prouder than he of the achievements of the Welsh troops in South Africa, even while he opposed the war in which they were being deployed. It was a militant patriot who became the leading figure in Britain in opposition to the South African War.

Lloyd George was in Canada when matters finally came to a head. He had gone there in August, along with Llewellyn Williams and W. J. Rees, at the invitation of Lord Strathcona, the High Commissioner, to study the prospects which Canada offered for Welsh immigrants of the farming and agricultural classes. From British Columbia he sent a message to his constituents on 18th September:

"The news from the Transvaal threatens to alter my arrangements. War means the summoning of Parliament, and the former seems

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now inevitable. The prospect oppresses us with sorrow, and I shall protest with all the vehemence I can command against this black-guardish action which is perpetrated in the name of human freedom."

Abandoning the tour, he hurried back to England; but when he arrived on 16th October the war had already started, and the Boer commandos were sweeping victoriously down into Natal. That circumstance very nearly changed his attitude to the war, for, when his country was attacked, all his instincts prompted him to fight back. However, he followed his cautious habit of studying his brief before taking the case to court. He got hold of the bluebooks and all available evidence as to the circumstances leading up to the outbreak. They confirmed him in his view that the war was unnecessary; that it had been gratuitously provoked by the British Government; and that in view of the concessions already offered by Kruger it should have been possible to achieve a peaceful settlement. He decided that the war was a criminal blunder, and that as soon as the Boers had been driven off British territory a fair settlement could and should be negotiated. He recognized that the Boers were not blameless in the affair. He described President Kruger as "a pig-headed, stubborn old Tory". But that did not warrant Britain in crushing two little communities of farmers. •

Meantime the British themselves were plunging into the war with the exuberance of a football team sallying forth to lick an inferior but impertinent challenger. It was the first time Britain had gone to war with a white race since the Crimea. People did not inquire too punctiliously about the details of the war's origin, and were not anxious to be dispassionately enlightened. It was enough that the Boers were a troublesome crowd who had been treating the British in their midst unfairly; that "Old Kroojer" was a scoundrel who had dared to send us an ultimatum. We would teach him a lesson! The most general regret was that as the Boers were so few the war would be very quickly over—over, in all probability, before most of those eager to take a hand in it could get to the front. Thus Winston Churchill, hurrying to the scene as special correspondent of the *Morning Post* by the same boat which took out General Sir Redvers Buller to command the British forces, was desperately afraid that they would both be too late for the fun. Chamberlain, who had decided to plunge into war on the assurance of his advisers in South Africa that the British Army would have little more than a victory march to Pretoria, enlivened by a skirmish or two, expected it to cost not more than twenty millions, and to be all over by Christmas. In fact the war lasted nearly three years, and cost the country over two hundred and forty millions.

Lloyd George, with his acute sensitivity to the popular mood, realized

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that the public were wildly enthusiastic for the war, and would have little patience with him if he opposed it. Such opposition would very likely spell political and financial ruin. The bulk of his own Party, including Lord Rosebery, Grey, Asquith, Haldane, Birrell, all supported the war, while their titular leader, Campbell-Bannerman, tried uneasily to steer a middle course. Most of his own constituents in the Caernarvon Boroughs had been swept into the stream of popular support for the war, and their goodwill and continued support would be most gravely jeopardized. But his own convictions on the matter were definite, and he could do no other than follow them. With nothing to gain and everything to lose by the course he took, he determined to oppose the war and press for it to be stopped.

It can hardly be doubted that his judgment on the facts of the case was reinforced by the prospect of being able to carry on in this new field the fight with Chamberlain which he had for years been maintaining over domestic issues. But while he felt that Joe was wrong, he was at first handicapped by a difficulty in deciding just what among the reasons for his opposition to the war were the most fundamental in his own mind and most convincing to his audiences. Feeling about for concrete objections to the war, L.G. at the outset grasped at the true but not very effectual criticism that we were squandering on a needless conflict the money that might have been used for old age pensions, and that the Uitlanders' grievances were nothing like so serious as those of the under-dogs at home. In his first public attack on the Government's policy, on 27th October in the House of Commons, he adopted this line of argument. A month later he went to Wales to speak at Carmarthen in support of the Liberal candidate. Here he developed further his case against the war. It was by no means the pacifist argument that it is wrong to fight, but rather the anger of a reformer at an event which arrested progress and trengthened reaction. He declared that this war was an infamy. He would not say, now that it had been forced upon us, that we had not got to put it through, though he hoped something would happen to stop it. But he denounced Chamberlain for his conduct in bringing this affliction on the nation. They were working in London to improve the slums, to lift the race, to reduce human misery, to better the conditions of the people, and now all that work had been dropped for the excitement of war.

War was a costly business, and this one would postpone old age pensions. There was not a lyddite shell exploding on the African hills but carried away an old age pension with it. There were the casualties of war—already a thousand killed and wounded. The war was unjustified, for the Boers had been ready to concede nearly all our demands. They had sound reasons for not granting the franchise too readily to

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foreigners newly come into their land, and the God-fearing Boers whom we were killing were better men than the largely alien gang of Uitlanders on whose behalf we had launched the war.

Only at the end did he touch on an argument which would later become the main ground of his opposition to the war. The Transvaal Boers were a nation of farmers, a hundred thousand of them, against whom we were massing the might of forty millions. We should crush them in their blood, but he wanted Wales to be free of the business. He had a superstitious horror that injustice could do no good. When the war was over, and it was the turn of Wales to plead her case for freedom, he would not have her voice choked with the memory of the blood of a similar nationality to her own which she had helped to crush.

His reasoning might be sound and his attitude wise, but the nation in those early months of the war was in no mood to heed him. When the dam has burst, one can do little to check the first mad rush of the torrent. His next major speech on this issue was made at Balliol College to a meeting of the Palmerston Club, on 27th January, 1900. His theme was "The New Imperialism". Here he dropped the querulous note of the frustrate reformer, the lament for postponed measures and lost old age pensions, and dealt with the war as a black stain on Britain's record as an Imperial Power. He castigated Chamberlain for his blunders in dealing with other states and raising hostility to Britain everywhere, but most he deplored the loss of our reputation as the champion of liberty.

"The land that protected Portugal against the rapacity of Continental despots, the land that has been the refuge of persecuted patriots from every clime—that land is now straining her resources to the utmost to accomplish by force what she has failed to effect by fraud, the destruction of the independence of two small Republics in South Africa. . . . It is true that at the end of this war we shall miss millions from our coffers. We shall lose much of that deference which has always been paid to the masters of many successful legions. We shall miss many a gallant name from the roll-call of our warriors. But there is something infinitely more precious to every true lover of Britain that we shall miss, and that is the distinction of being the hope and shield of the weak in all lands, which was once the brightest gem in Britain's glory. No Liberal would have bartered that for all the gold in the Rand."

During those early weeks the war was going very badly indeed for Britain. Our forces were fighting on British, not Boer, territory, and being repeatedly defeated. Stormberg, Magersfontein, Colenso, Nicholson's Nek and many smaller disasters were recorded. The Government

had to play its trump cards, and Lord Roberts and Kitchener were sent out in December, 1899, reaching the Cape in January and starting their advance at the beginning of February 1900. When Parliament reassembled after the Christmas recess the Liberals put down an amendment to the Address, cautiously worded so as to condemn the Government's lack of foresight and preparation without expressing any view as to the justice of the war itself.

Speaking to this amendment on 6th February, 1900, Lloyd George made what was acclaimed by friend and foe as the finest speech he had ever yet delivered in Parliament. Sir William Harcourt passed him at its close a slip of paper on which he had written, "You have made a speech which Grattan himself might have envied!" Campbell-Bannerman personally congratulated him on his "great performance", and Sydney Buxton and almost all the Front Bench added their compliments. Balfour said to one of his friends, "Of course, I am not at all in agreement with it, but I must say that it is the best speech I have ever heard in the House of Commons."

In March, Lloyd George attacked the war in a speech at Glasgow, where his wit and eloquence did more than the stalwart chuckers-out organized by Keir Hardie to win him a hearing. He addressed the Liberal Federation at Nottingham. It was not until 11th April that he delivered a major speech on the war in his own constituency, where his supporters were acutely divided on the issue, most of them disagreeing with his attitude.

Characteristically he chose Bangor, the roughest, toughest and most Conservative of the Boroughs, as the stage for this utterance. A considerate Tory offered him a coat of mail for the occasion, but like an earlier David he preferred to rely on his sling and stones—though in the event it was the other side which used the stones! It was a lively meeting. A hostile crowd greeted him with howls of "Pro-Boer!" and missiles on his arrival, and there were many inside the Penrhyn Hall who were resolved to interrupt and break up the meeting. While he was speaking the mob outside kept up a fusillade of stones and broke all the outer windows, to the accompaniment of martial music by a cornet player.

In this very discordant atmosphere Lloyd George spoke for an hour, skilfully wooing his audience by stressing the Liberal and patriotic views which he shared with them, till he mastered their antagonism and could put plainly to them his reasons for opposing the Boer War. He spoke warmly of the British troops and their generals, and of the help rendered to Britain by her self-governing colonies, who enjoyed freedom to manage their own affairs. From that it was an easy transition to denouncing the attempt to rob another small colonial people of their freedom. Was England, the home of freedom, who held the loyalty of her colonies

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through the freedom she gave them, to imitate Russia's treatment of Poland and annex two small, independent communities ?

When he sat down amid a scene of wild enthusiasm a resolution which he had drafted was moved and carried, after a critical amendment had found only a dozen supporters. The crowd outside, however, kept up its frenzy and made several attempts during the meeting to rush the hall. When Lloyd George came out there was a chaos of cheers and groans. A man rushed up and struck him on the head with a bludgeon. His bowler hat cushioned the blow and the police drew him, half-stunned, into a café, from which he presently made his escape by a back exit.

On 27th April he addressed another big meeting, this time in Caernarvon. Enemies had promised him an even rougher experience than that of Bangor; but in fact the affair passed off quite peaceably. Indeed, the cheering when L.G. rose to speak was so loud and prolonged that the chairman had to check it, saying with a laugh that if they persisted in giving such proofs of their enthusiasm they would be there all night!

He concentrated in his speech on the theme which from now on he made the foundation of his opposition to the war: the iniquity of a big nation robbing a little one of its freedom. At the outset of the struggle Lord Salisbury, the Prime Minister, had announced, "We seek no goldfields and territory." But now the cry of annexation of the Boer Republics was being openly raised. This gave Lloyd George a clear issue with which to deal—the iniquity of a war of aggression.

He made it plain that he was no upholder of the pacifist case against fighting in any circumstances, saying:

"I am told that we are fighting for the cause of humanity. There are certain things for which I would be prepared to support Britain, if necessary, against the whole world. Britain stood practically alone against the despotism of Napoleon. Britain was right, and Britain conquered because she had right on her side. Britain may yet have to fight practically the whole world, and if she has right on her side, she will conquer!"

These, surely, were the words not only of a warrior, but of a seer!

He declared that he belonged to a small nation, and wanted fair play for small nations. He appealed to the people of Wales, a little nation which had fought for centuries for their rights, not to take part in the work of extinguishing these two little Republics of South Africa.

The resolution which he had moved was carried with only one dissident, and there was no trouble when he left the hall. But he was less fortunate when he went on 5th July to speak at a meeting at Liskeard, Cornwall, presided over by A. T. Quiller-Couch, the well-known

author. The platform was stormed and some of the speakers, including L.G., were rudely hustled.

By June, 1900, Lord Roberts had captured Pretoria, and the Government now proceeded formally to annex the Transvaal. It was generally assumed that the war would shortly come to an end, but Lloyd George, speaking at length on 25th July in a debate on the Colonial Office vote, warned the country that a war of annexation against a proud people would develop into a long war of extermination, involving the burning of homesteads and mounting brutality. It was already evident that the Government designed to rush on a General Election while the war was still in progress, so as to cash in on the patriotic excitement of the people, and he denounced the trickery of this plan.

The election—known ever after as the “Khaki Election”—was duly held in the autumn. Its result was, of course, a foregone conclusion. The Liberal Opposition was hopelessly split between the Liberal Imperialists who supported the war and the Radicals who opposed it. The Tories clapped the Union Jack on their posters and denounced all their opponents as Pro-Boers and traitors, whether these supported the war or not. In the mood of the moment the epithet “Pro-Boer” was enough to damn any man socially, and often economically. Lloyd George himself faced financial ruin. His solicitor’s practice in the City dwindled almost to nothing, for no one cared to have the infamous Pro-Boer acting for him in a legal case. The City, despite the many brilliant men who frequent it, is in the mass the most conventional and most easily stampeded community in Britain.

When the outlook was at its blackest he warned his wife that he might have to send her and the children back to Criccieth to live and take to a garret himself. But whatever happened, he would keep up the fight. He offered to do anything he could to protect the interests of his partner, Rhys Roberts, but Roberts was no quitter, and refused to break away from him. L.G.’s eldest boy, Richard, had such a purgatorial time at his school in London that he had to be shifted to one at Portmadoc. Indeed, both then and a few years later, it was not much fun to be one of Lloyd George’s children.

His prospects of re-election for the Boroughs looked black. Several of his chief supporters told him frankly that they could not vote for him. He was burned in effigy at Nevin, Pwllheli, and even Criccieth; but his enemies went too far when they also burned in effigy his uncle, Richard Lloyd, whose saintly character was held locally in profoundest respect. This tasteless and contemptible act disgraced the perpetrators and their cause in the eyes of the Boroughs.

When the election campaign started, L.G. faced a slow, uphill fight. But though feeling ran high, he was able to get a hearing. That was all

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he needed. He had a case to put in which he passionately believed; a case which he could support by telling arguments; a case which, now that the frenzies of the moment are ancient history, can be seen in retrospect as a very strong one. His sincerity was never in doubt; and he had the most winning and persuasive eloquence ever given to a British orator with which to put his case: an eloquence specially adapted to the emotions of a Welsh audience.

He put the case at Caernarvon, denouncing the war and Chamberlain, and winning unanimous support for his renomination. He went to Pwllheli and secured their vote of confidence. Nevin was the most doubtful Borough, for the Nevin Liberals had always been very far to the Right, and now strongly supported the war. There were sullen groups of people standing about the street as he drove up to his meeting on 15th September, and few ventured to raise a cheer. The audience which gradually filtered into the New Town Hall till they packed it listened with no show of enthusiasm to a cautious resolution, moved by Bryn Roberts, denouncing the Government for its past legislation but making no reference to the war.

Lloyd George devoted the first part of his speech to this theme, castigating the Tory record during the past five years—no old age pensions, no workmen's houses, but two million pounds a year handed to the landlords by the Agricultural Rates Act, seven hundred thousand to Irish landlords and nearly eight hundred thousand to Church of England schools. He attacked Chamberlain for the Government contracts given to Kynochs, in which firm the Chamberlain family were large shareholders, and compared him unfavourably with Kruger. The audience, though here and there he won laughter and some applause, remained in general stonily unresponsive. Finally he turned to them with a defiant challenge:

"Five years ago, the electors of the Caernarvon Boroughs handed to me my strip of blue paper, the certificate of my election, to hand to the Speaker of Parliament as your duly accredited representative. If I never again represent the Caernarvon Boroughs in the House of Commons, I shall at least have the satisfaction of handing back to you that blue paper without any stain of human blood upon it, while Mr. Chamberlain will be responsible for the ten thousand brave men who lie buried in African sands!"

At that the audience rose, stirred to its depths by the emotional and moral appeal of the words, spoken in the lilting music of the Welsh language. There was no more apathy. A vote of confidence was given amid a storm of applause, and as Lloyd George drove away the crowds outside broke into loud cheers.

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After this triumph at Nevin, the temperature of his support rose rapidly. Apart from the debatable question of the Boer War, he had an excellent record of service to the constituency to show, and plenty of well-based criticism of the Government to expound. He had been charged with attacking our troops, but could tell how, far from doing so, he had seconded a resolution calling on the Government to compensate the families of the fallen, and had pressed for the British soldier to get as good pay as was being given to the Colonial troops. He was as proud of the Welch Fusiliers as any Tory could be, however much he condemned the war in which they had been sent to fight. When he revisited Nevin, nine days after the previous meeting there, he was greeted with the utmost enthusiasm. "You will be our member all your lifetime!" cried a voice, and the people cheered wildly. When he left, a crowd of men drew his carriage by hand to the top of the hill on the road to Pwllheli.

Criccieth, Conway, Bangor, all gave him an eager hearing. In his election address, as in his speeches, he pointed out that while the Tories were fighting on the issue of the Boer War, the Parliament to be elected would be dealing with domestic issues for most of its seven years; and he urged the merits of the Liberal programme of domestic reform. One by one, and then in crowds, his old supporters drifted back to him.

Polling day came—6th October. The result was expected by about 11.30 p.m. Actually it was twenty minutes past midnight when the Mayor stepped out on the balcony of the Caernarvon Guild Hall to read the figures, but all the streets around were packed tight with dense crowds. He got as far as "Lloyd George", but everything else was drowned in a mighty roar from the multitude. Someone had to run down and give the figures to the nearest bystanders, to be passed like wildfire from mouth to mouth, for no announcement could be heard above the shouting. Lloyd George had beaten his Tory opponent, Colonel Platt, by 296—much the largest majority he had yet scored!

"Pro-Boer" Lloyd George might be dubbed, but the Celt is very tenacious of his loyalties once given, especially when his chosen leader becomes the object of attack by the alien.

From the very start of the war Lloyd George had warned the country that it would go on for a long time. He knew by instinct that a race of farmers would be capable of maintaining the struggle for their independence to the bitter end. A war of conquest, as he had warned the Government, would become a war of extermination. That forecast was now proved by events.

After the initial defeat of the Boers and the capture of Pretoria, Lord Kitchener and Sir Alfred Milner, the High Commissioner, had conferred with General Botha at Middleburg, and the three had reached a large measure of agreement on terms of surrender which would have

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secured to the Boers an early assurance of representative government. Chamberlain had turned down these proposals and demanded unconditional surrender. It was a disastrous decision, and as L.G. predicted, it lengthened the war by nearly two years. You can get unconditional surrender from a general, an army staff, or a government. But where every man in the nation is a guerilla warrior, ready to go on fighting independently, you must round up the last of them before surrender is complete.

At the demand for unconditional surrender the Boer farmers reached for their rifles and horses and rejoined their commandos, which were skilfully directed by De Wet. Worse, the war spread far outside the frontiers of the two Republics, for the major part of the population of Cape Colony was Dutch, and many of them actively supported their friends. The whole of South Africa became a battleground for a civil war—always the most cruel kind of war, for the British regarded the revolting Boers as traitors, and these in turn resorted to every trick and stratagem against their enemy. British generals adopted the discreditable policy of reprisals, and when a train was raided or wrecked they would burn down every farmhouse in the neighbourhood and turn their inmates out into the empty veldt to starve. Thus a proclamation issued by Major-General Bruce Hamilton on 1st November, 1900, ran as follows:

"The town of Ventersburg has been cleared of supplies and partly burnt, and the farms in the vicinity destroyed on account of the frequent attacks on the railway line in the neighbourhood. The Boer women and children who are left behind should apply to the Boer commandants for food, who will supply them, unless they wish to see them starve. No supplies will be sent from the railway to the town."

"Measures have been taken," admitted the Conservative *St. James's Gazette*, "which cannot be justified by any canon of civilized warfare." Kitchener was ultimately compelled to adopt the device of clearing the country and erecting lines of block-houses across it to pen back the Boer commandos. The farms were burned and the Boer women and children herded into concentration camps under wretched conditions, where they died off like flies.

It can well be understood that Lloyd George, having from the outset viewed the war as unjustified, was roused to fury by this shameful development. In the House of Commons he became a dogged and irrepressible assailant of Chamberlain, as the statesman responsible for it all, and attacked him night after night. Bitter duels resulted, for

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Chamberlain was a savage and unscrupulous enemy in debate, with a gift for mordant invective before which most opponents quailed. Lloyd George did not quail: he too was a master of invective, though he edged it with a wit and humour that had no place in Joe's bitter style.

During these years there was civil war, not only in South Africa, but in the Liberal Party. Asquith, Grey and the rest of the Right Wing strongly supported Chamberlain, and Asquith rebuked Lloyd George in a speech in the House on 21st February, 1901, for the line he was taking. In the country the Party was similarly divided, and for a time those who rallied to Lloyd George's side were poorly represented in the national Press. To remedy this he seized the opportunity, presented by a measure of financial embarrassment occurring in the control of the *Daily News*, to persuade George Cadbury and some others like-minded to put up the money to buy the paper. From that time on the *Daily News* gave vigorous support to Lloyd George and his "Stop the War!" campaign.

At the same time Lloyd George strengthened his standing in the Party through the fact that he was the leading advocate of progressive reforms. At the meetings of the National Liberal Federation at Bradford in May 1901 he moved a resolution urging the policies of

Adult manhood suffrage, and the principle of "one man one vote".

Official election expenses to be a public charge.

Payment of Members of Parliament.

Abolition of the veto of the House of Lords.

A measure of devolution to free Parliament of concern with local affairs and leave it freer to deal with National and Imperial matters.

It has already been noted that Lloyd George had for years been a persistent advocate of old age pensions. This resolution shows him also at this early stage originating other reforms which ultimately were enacted by the Liberal Government between 1906 and 1914. At another meeting of this Conference he expressed himself as in favour of Women's Suffrage.

An article in the periodical *The King*, of 25th May, 1901, predicted that he would be given office in the next Liberal Administration. It said of him:

"Mr. Lloyd George has been called an extreme Radical and Pro-Boer; it may be doubted if these caps quite fit the handsome head of the ardent young reformer. When Mr. Lloyd George takes a strong line, as he did at the Bradford meetings last week, he is so patently conscientious over it that he immediately impresses his hearers. Wales is proud of him, and has bestowed on him that fire and zeal

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which are instantly detected in his speeches and his actions. . . . Keen, able and personally pleasant, Mr. Lloyd George is certain to rise in the House of Commons. He is a typical, sturdy 'Non-Con.'—a Baptist, to wit—and a temperance and educational reformer, whose platform services are eagerly cherished and appreciated."

Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, who had striven to keep a balanced attitude between the two wings of the Liberal Party, came down heavily on Lloyd George's side in a speech to the National Reform Union on 14th June, 1901, when he denounced the concentration camps and the conduct of the war. "When is a war not a war?" he asked, and gave the answer, "When it is carried on by methods of barbarism!"

Asquith let fly a counter-blast to Campbell-Bannerman, who promptly reaffirmed and elaborated his criticism of the Government's war policy, but at the same time pleaded for Liberal unity. Lloyd George, who, though quick to oppose those with whom he disagreed, was ever averse from proscribing them, joined in a meeting at the Reform Club on 9th July, when the Liberals of both sides came together on the basis of united support for Campbell-Bannerman and liberty for each to take his own line about the war. Lord Rosebery, who held aloof from this reunion, thereupon announced his intention to plough his furrow alone.

An article on Lloyd George at this time (15th July, 1901), in the *Sheffield Independent*, attributed to him the main responsibility for the crisis in the Liberal Party, but admitted that the driving force of both its Right and Left movements came from him. "Mr. Lloyd George is the leader of a definite cult of politics, just as 'Imperial' Perks or Mr. Asquith is the leader of an opposing cult. Indeed, we owe Mr. Asquith to Mr. Lloyd George, and the Liberal split to both." It acknowledged that he could always fill the Chamber when he spoke in the House.

"The passion of the man has a sort of fascination for the most cynical Chamber known to Englishmen. His virulence of invective stirs as Mr. John Dillon's never stirs. It glows and flames into shade the measured monody of Mr. John Redmond's eloquence. . . . Mr. Chamberlain can cease to be a 'gentleman of England', or of anywhere else, when he has to throw a rhetorical brickbat at the sharpest, smartest, boldest critic of his policy in South Africa. The Liberal 'Upper Ten' do not like him, partly because of his pronounced Boer sympathies and mainly, I imagine, because he persists in leading where so many of his own side decline to follow."

An event of this session which was to be of historic significance was the appearance in Parliament of a young man, Winston Churchill, fresh

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from adventures in South Africa. He arranged to make his first speech in the House towards the end of February, and Lloyd George, who was speaking on an Amendment to the Address, and criticizing the Government for its brutal actions in South Africa, deliberately shortened his speech to give more time for the newcomer, who was known to be planning a counter-attack. Actually, Churchill, while denouncing Lloyd George's bitterness, included appreciative references to the Boers in his speech, and criticized the conduct of some of the British military authorities. Lloyd George told him afterwards that he was on the wrong side, and the two began a personal friendship which endured for the rest of their lives.

When the House rose, the political correspondent of the *Newcastle Daily Leader* wrote:

"Quite the most remarkable success of the session on either side of the House of Commons has been that of Mr. Lloyd George, who has risen at a bound to the actual leadership of a very considerable party in the House."

The article proceeded to contrast the courage of Lloyd George with that of Sir Edward Grey, admitting that both had courage of the highest order:

"Sir Edward 'sees his duty, a dead-sure thing', and goes forward. Mr. Lloyd George is swept along by inward fire. He is of the stuff of which revolutions are made. Sir Edward would go 'into the jaws of hell' because he felt that it was his 'but to do or die'. Mr. Lloyd George would venture on the same expedition in sheer delight at the prospect of getting to close quarters with the devil!"

Before the year was out he came to dangerously close quarters, if not with the devil, at least with the supporters of the statesman whom he held to be the evil genius of the war. All through the autumn he had been addressing crowded meetings in Wales, Scotland and England; and although his views on the war might be widely unpopular, his oratory in defence of them was so skilful that he carried his audiences with him, and many who came to hoot remained to cheer. Finally the Birmingham Liberal Association invited him to address them in the Birmingham Town Hall on 18th December.

Other Birmingham folk, however, by no means welcomed the prospect of the arch-Pro-Boer and bitter critic of their local hero, Joe, coming to make a speech in their midst. The Liberal Unionists were specially savage about it—far more so than the Tories—as is not un-

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common with recent converts! The *Birmingham Daily Post* and *Birmingham Daily Mail* joyously suggested that there would be rioting and published letters advocating violent treatment for Lloyd George if he should dare to come and attempt to speak. Trouble was carefully organized by some of Chamberlain's supporters, who printed large numbers of forged tickets for the meeting, and sent round sandwichmen on the day of the affair, calling on the citizens to gather at the Town Hall to defend the King, the Government and Mr. Chamberlain!

Friends warned L.G. that it would be dangerous for him to go to Birmingham, and the Birmingham Chief of Police wrote him to the same effect. But though he knew he took his life in his hands, he would not hear of the meeting being abandoned.

A crowd waited at the station to waylay him on his arrival, but he dodged them by travelling on an earlier train. The Town Hall was beset in the evening by a seething multitude, but he drove up to a side door with his hostess and her little daughter, and gained the building unobserved by his enemies. When the mob learned that he was inside a furious uproar arose. Brass bands at the four corners of the hall started playing "Rule, Britannia!" and in every part of the crowd mass-protest meetings formed. The people who first entered the hall were authentic ticket-holders, members of the Liberal Association, but before long the doors were stormed, one of them being smashed down with a battering-ram, and seven thousand men crammed the hall, waving Union Jacks and screaming execrations on Lloyd George.

Realizing that he might be unable to deliver his speech, he swiftly dictated to a reporter in a room behind the platform what he meant to say, and then sallied forth. When he appeared on the platform bedlam broke loose, and shrieks of "Kill him!" He tried in vain to speak. Then a mass of men drove forward, bursting the police cordon round the platform, and began to storm it. L.G. refused to go, but his friends hustled him off into the large Committee Room under police protection, while the mob broke up the hall. Bricks and stones were slung through its windows by the crowd outside—some men did a brisk trade selling half-bricks at three a penny "to throw at Lloyd George", though the only people hit were their own allies inside the hall.

All the efforts of the police failed to disperse the mob, a section of which was clearly bent on murder. It became imperative to get Lloyd George away, and presently his friend and host, Mr. Evans, suggested dressing him up in a policeman's uniform. He would not hear of it. But the Chief Constable at last won his reluctant consent by telling him that it was the only way to save the lives of his friends, who would be torn to pieces if the mob broke in. So presently from a side door a long single file of constables emerged, marching as if off to their beat, and the crowd

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let them pass. For over two miles they marched through the packed streets till they got to Ladywood Police Station. One man in the crowd is said to have spotted L.G., but his shout was unheeded by the crowd; they were all shouting. After he arrived at his hostess's house L.G. telephoned to his home at Wandsworth Common, thinking they would like to know that he was safe. But there was no reply. Everyone had gone to bed!

Chamberlain was rumoured to be keenly disappointed at his enemy's escape. When a member rallied him in the lobby of the House about the failure of the Birmingham folk to kill L.G., Joe growled, "What is everybody's business is nobody's business!" Some people thought he would have shed no tears if the affair had had a different ending.

Lloyd George, too, got more bitter as the fight went on. At the opening of the new Session in January 1902 the Liberals tabled an amendment carefully designed to secure the support of all sections. He held it to be a dishonest compromise, and with that sudden savagery towards a friend, of which he was from time to time guilty, he rounded on Campbell-Bannerman and held him up to ridicule, declaring that he had been captured by the Imperialists, and that "his captors have treated him as the Boers treat their prisoners; they have stripped him of his principles and left him on the veldt to find his way back as best he can. I hope this will be a lesson to him!" Many of the Liberals keenly resented the unseemliness of this attack, but C.-B. himself was content to utter a dignified rebuke, and did not relax his personal friendship with his critic.

L.G.'s last speech in the House on the Boer War during its course was delivered on 20th March, 1902, and appropriately enough was a devastating counterblast to a savage attack which Chamberlain had made on Campbell-Bannerman. The Colonial Secretary had failed to carry through his policy of unconditional surrender. Next month the Boer delegates assembled at Klerksdorp, and in May a peace was negotiated with them at Vereeniging, and signed at Pretoria on the last day of the month. Its terms contained an assurance of that reasonable settlement, with a prospect of self-government, for which L.G. had so long pleaded; a settlement which could have been reached two years earlier but for Chamberlain's arrogant overruling of Kitchener.

The nation celebrated its victory. But in historic fact no one had achieved a bigger victory in those three years than Lloyd George. Execrated, stoned, beaten, howled down, he had held his course with a courage which his worst enemies could never deny; a self-sacrificing devotion to the cause of justice as he saw it which would stand always as proof that he was no popularity-hunting demagogue. He had led where at first few would follow; but so well did he lead that the few became many, and in the end he stood out as a front-rank figure who dominated the political scene.

## CHAPTER VIII

### NONCONFORMIST CONSCIENCE

THE South African War had forced on Lloyd George the grimmest and most irksome test of his political honesty which he ever had to endure. It was no light thing to have to oppose most of the honoured leaders of his own Party; to face scorn and hatred from the multitude and stoning by the mob; to be at variance with his own Welsh people and with his chief supporters in his constituency; and to see his solicitor's practice so ruined that he came near the brink of financial disaster. But an even tenser conflict was that between his intellectual convictions and his native instincts. A born fighter, heir of a warlike race, he was fated to oppose a fight. A keen patriot, with a healthy pride in the Empire, he had to figure as an anti-Imperialist in the company of men whose patriotism burned low. He never doubted that he had chosen the right path, but it was a thorny path for him.

Now, as the war drew to its close, another conflict opened up for him in which all these drawbacks were reversed. It enlisted the support alike of his conscience, his instincts, and all his early training and deepest convictions. It brought him immense popularity with his constituents and the mass of the Welsh people, as well as with vast multitudes in England; while in the House of Commons he became the recognized leader and spokesman of the Liberal vanguard. This was the great struggle which raged round Balfour's Education Bill. If the Boer War had made Lloyd George notorious, the Education Bill made him famous.

He had always a passionate interest in educational reform, and when the Bill was introduced in March 1902 he was at first sight disposed to welcome it. He told a reporter:

"I am not unfavourably impressed with the Bill, judging it from a purely Welsh point of view. I am, however, assured by English members that the Bill will be a bad thing for England, as the English County Councils are not so interested in education as the Welsh County Councils. The Bill itself is simply an extension of the organization of Welsh intermediate education to primary education. There may be points in the Bill which I cannot agree with, and until I have seen it in print I must reserve further opinion."

The Bill was undoubtedly in many respects a highly valuable and progressive measure. Elementary education in England and Wales was

then in a very unsatisfactory condition. A century earlier, Dissenters had started a movement to provide "British Schools" for the children of the poor, and the Established Church had been stimulated by this to found "National Schools", with the avowed object of educating the children of the poor in the principles of the Church of England. The Education Act of 1870 at last set up School Boards all over the country with the duty of providing a school place for every child, and "Board Schools" appeared. Most of the British Schools were transferred to the Boards and—apart from a few Roman Catholic, Wesleyan and Jewish schools—elementary education was split between the National Schools, owned by the Church, and Board Schools, provided out of the rates. Both gave free education and drew grants from the Exchequer for their upkeep, but both—especially some of the older National Schools—were falling far behind the need for a rising standard of public education.

The Bill laid it down that all these public elementary schools recognized by the Board of Education should be taken over by the County or Borough Councils, which must set up Education Committees to control them and levy rates for their upkeep to supplement the Exchequer grants. This was a notable step forward, which made possible a great improvement in the system of elementary education. But one feature of the Bill roused a storm of opposition. Under strong pressure from the Church authorities, Balfour left intact the dual system which was the bane of English elementary education. The Church Schools were not to be acquired by the Councils and brought under public ownership. The Church might continue to own them if it kept them in structural repair, and retain the right to appoint the majority of their managers. This carried the corollary right of appointing their teachers and of requiring the principal to be a communicant of the Established Church.

Not only was this felt by educationists to be a grave blemish on the measure. It was also held by Nonconformists to impose a gross injustice on them. The cost of running the National Schools was being placed on the rates, and they must pay for their children to be taught a catechism in which they did not believe. If those children were bright and wanted to rise to become school-teachers—at that time almost the only learned profession accessible to children of the working classes—they had in many areas no chance of this unless they joined the Church of England.

The hostility of Church and Dissent—almost forgotten today—was at the beginning of the century reaching a climax of bitterness. It was a period of social awakening. The prosperity achieved in the nineteenth century and the spread of education and abundant cheap literature had raised both the material and the intellectual standards of the masses, who no longer accepted their inferiority as a divine decree. Nonconformists were significantly beginning to call themselves Free

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Churchmen and to revolt against the scorn meted out to them by the Established Church. Many of the Church clergy, uneasy at the waxing challenge of Nonconformity, turned to Anglo-Catholicism, with its doctrine that exclusive sacramental powers and a peculiar spiritual authority were vested in the episcopally ordained priest. Evangelical Nonconformists, abhorring anything that smelt of popery, were in consequence less than ever disposed to see their children placed under priestly domination in the schools.

Nowhere was this bitter antagonism so keenly felt as in Wales, where the great bulk of the people were Nonconformist, while most of the village schools were Church Schools. Landowning squires had been ready enough to sell or give sites for National Schools, but not for schools set up by Dissenters. And of all the Welshmen who resented the domination of the Anglican priesthood, none was more wholehearted or more vocal in his opposition than Lloyd George. He had himself been a rebellious pupil in a Church School, and had been compelled to reject the offer of an opening in the teaching profession because it was linked with the condition that he should change his faith. He was an incarnation of Welsh Nonconformity. A writer in the *Sheffield Independent* of 15th July, 1901, had said of him: "He has the Nonconformist Conscience strong at the back of his character. . . . He shows the Nonconformist Conscience in being. He embodies it and typifies it."

The Education Bill brought the Nonconformist Conscience into the political arena as a very potent force. The effect was not only to give Lloyd George a firm foothold for his attacks on the Government, but to revive and reunite the Liberal Party. In the Home Rule split of 1886 many Nonconformists, fearing that Home Rule meant Rome Rule, had followed Chamberlain into the Liberal Unionist Party. The Boer War had brought a schism into the remnant of the Party and towards its close the Liberal Imperialists, led by Asquith, Grey and Haldane, had formed the Liberal League which looked toward Rosebery, not Campbell-Bannerman, for leadership. But the Education Bill brought them all together again, and to Chamberlain's alarm drew back many thousands of Nonconformist Unionists to the Liberal fold. From being a wrangling, incoherent minority, Liberalism stiffened round the central core of Nonconformist revolt against the Bill into a confident, aggressive, political army.

In this new fight Lloyd George stepped to the front as the natural and inevitable leader. Up and down the country he ranged, denouncing the measure. His main thesis was that a school maintained by the State to teach all the children of a district—children of various denominations—should not be authorized to impose on them the doctrines of one particular sect. The Board Schools had given unsectarian religious teaching based

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on the Bible. Was not that good enough? Was the Catechism better than the Bible? He favoured the colonial system which permitted doctrinal teaching to be given out of school hours by the clergy of the different denominations. He objected to the selection of teachers being left with the parish priests, who too often chose men, not for their teaching ability, but for their religious views or their ability to play the organ in church. Bitter personal memory edged his denunciations of the parson's power to tempt sons of Nonconformist parents to desert their fathers' faith in order to enter the teaching profession. His lifelong zeal for education reinforced his religious objections, for he held that priestly control of the schools tended to inefficiency, and Britain must be educated if she was to hold her own against her rivals and find solutions for her problems of poverty and unemployment. "I would rather trust those problems to settlement by an educated, thoughtful people than I would to men who have got three years' catechism from the parsons."

He led the fight in the House of Commons. With his thorough knowledge of local administration, he was able to move amendment after amendment and keep the debate going interminably. "After two or three months of struggling in Parliament," he told an audience at Bangor on 17th September, "they have succeeded in placing two-and-a-half pages out of twenty-two of the Bill on the Statute Book!" The other Liberal leaders had neither the zeal nor the parliamentary adroitness for such warfare.

At last, in December, the Bill reached its third reading, somewhat amended by Lloyd George's persistence, though still retaining the features he found obnoxious. His speech on that occasion was a last protest, running over ground that had grown familiar to his audiences and ending with a moving plea for non-sectarian teaching:

"Give the children the Bible if you want to teach them the Christian faith. Let it be expounded to them by its Founder. Stop this brawling of priests in and around the schools, so that the children can hear Him speak to them in His own words. I appeal to the House of Commons now, at the eleventh hour, to use its great influence and lift its commanding voice and say: 'Pray, silence for the Master!'"

His appeal was unavailing, but the sincerity, skill and tireless energy with which he had maintained the fight against the Bill were universally recognized. The Premier, Balfour, paid him the compliment in his final speech of saying:

"His part in these debates has been most distinguished, and though I could wish unsaid some of his observations . . . we must all admit

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on both sides of the House and in the country that he has made himself a position as an eminent Parliamentarian!"

When the Bill went up to the House of Lords Lord Rosebery paid him a further compliment, saying:

"Frequent allusions have been made to the fight which has been carried on in the House of Commons for the last seven months against the Bill. That fight has been carried on in the main by Nonconformists, of whom the great protagonist has been Mr. Lloyd George, who has fought this Bill with a readiness of resource to which speakers on both sides of the House have done justice."

Reviewing the parliamentary session on 19th December, 1902, the *Daily Chronicle* wrote of the fight over the Bill:

"Sir Edward Grey and Mr. Asquith have also lent their counsel, but one feels regretful that they did not speak oftener. The great mass of the work has been done by a few unofficial Liberals. . . . Of these Mr. Lloyd George has been the leader, and his contributions to debate have been both numerous and brilliant. He has three distinct faculties, all of them of great parliamentary value. He has a gift of simple eloquence, and his other two accomplishments are his mastery of detail and his humour. This latter quality . . . is a great addition to his debating powers, for in a phrase or a sentence he can sum up an argument. His illustrations and his jests strike home. . . . His Committee powers are striking. I have watched these debates very closely, and I have been struck by the way in which Mr. George has grasped the points of each discussion."

From this time on, Liberals in Parliament and in the country prized him as a fighting leader. Nonconformists saw in him their chief political representative and Welsh Nonconformity especially delighted to honour him as the incarnation of its spirit and purpose. He was the most eagerly sought-after of all Liberal speakers and was greeted everywhere at meetings with delighted enthusiasm and spontaneous "musical honours".

When the Bill became law, English Nonconformists determined to defy it and resort to passive resistance—refusal to pay the local Education Rate where it was to be used for maintaining a Church School. In town and village all over the country men stood by this refusal, and endured distraint of their furniture and effects, which were sold up to pay the rate. It was the only form of protest open to them, for though numerous they were in a minority.

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In Wales they were not in a minority, and Lloyd George planned a more efficacious resistance. He was not enamoured of "Passive Resistance". He had experienced its drawbacks during the tithe war in Wales. Besides, he was now rising to the ranks of those who would form a Government ere long. Had not a critic recently named him as a prospective Prime Minister? Defiance of the law is not a course which a statesman cares to encourage.

The strategy which Lloyd George employed in handling the Education Act issue as it affected Wales gave clear evidence of that real skill in statecraft which lay behind his oratorical magic, his legal adroitness and his unquenchable pugnacity.

Thanks to amendments he had succeeded in carrying in Committee, the Act placed final authority for its administration in the hands of the County and Borough Councils. Even while the Bill was still before Parliament Lloyd George started an active campaign in Wales to capture the Councils at the next elections; and in a letter to the *British Weekly* of 11th September, 1902, he strongly urged English Nonconformists to follow suit. Then, when the Act was passed, he proceeded to unmask his batteries in an "Address to the People of Wales". Some of the Councils had been saying they would refuse to administer the Act. That, he pointed out, was not the way to defeat it. They would be superseded and in the meantime education would suffer. The real way to defeat it was to administer it—to "capture the enemy's artillery and turn his guns against him!" For this, the Councils must act in combination, as under the Act they were empowered to do. They could jointly prepare a scheme for its administration which would exclude nominations to County Education Committees by bodies not representative of the ratepayers. They could have all the schools rigidly surveyed—the Government inspectors had in the past turned a blind eye to the defects of Church Schools—and refuse to take over responsibility for running any schools till they were in thorough repair. They could refrain from levying rates to support any schools where full public control, including appointment of the teaching staffs without doctrinal tests, was refused them. Such schools would have to subsist on the Treasury grants. Finally, an offer should be made to the Church School managers to adopt the Colonial system of allowing facilities for the children to be taught the doctrines of the Church to which their parents belonged. Where this was agreed, full assistance should be given.

He followed up this Address by summoning a Conference of the Welsh Liberal Council at Cardiff on 21st January, 1903, to which he submitted a series of resolutions embodying these proposals and setting them forth as a definite policy to be followed by the Welsh Councils. He did not advocate breaking the law. They must administer it to the

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letter in the good old spirit of the British Constitution, which was never in a hurry to do anything. "We will administer as many of the full stops as we can!" The policy he propounded could be held to be within the letter of the law, and if it was carried out it would be hard for the Government to take effective proceedings against them.

This was brilliant strategy. But the quality of Lloyd George's statesmanship was shown even more by the efforts he made to reach an understanding with the hierarchy of the Welsh Church which would remove the cause of the conflict. His essay in this direction was not popular with Welsh Nonconformity, but Lloyd George realized that to achieve a just peace was finer than to fight a successful war; so with all his love of a fight he did his best to avert one. Following preliminary discussions at Llandrindod Wells, he arranged a conference on 24th March, 1903, at the Westminster Palace Hotel, between the representatives of the Welsh County Councils, headed by himself, and those of the Church Schools in the Diocese of St. Asaph, headed by the Bishop. He laid before this Conference suggestions for a Concordat in regard to religious instruction and school management, proposing the adoption of an agreed syllabus of religious instruction, which should be jointly approved by Established and Free Church leaders for use in all elementary schools, provided and non-provided, combined with right of entry for local clergy and ministers at an hour technically outside regular school hours to give doctrinal instruction to children of their own denomination. To meet the problem of management the Church Schools should be leased to the local education authorities, the ecclesiastical owners retaining the right to appoint two of the managers, while of the other four, two were appointed by the County Council and two by the Parish Council.

The Bishop of St. Asaph, whom Lloyd George had in his earlier days pilloried as a sort of episcopal bogey-man, proved extremely reasonable when met face to face, and took a most favourable view of Lloyd George's scheme. Had the other bishops and clergy been as moderate and conciliatory, the Concordat would have become established. But the Bishop of St. David's and some of the parish clergy would have no truck with any sort of compromise with Dissent, and this effort at peacemaking foundered on their opposition. One good thing came out of the failure. Lloyd George and his former antagonist the Bishop of St. Asaph struck up a warm friendship, and in the following years they worked happily together in the interests of Welsh education and other issues affecting the Principality.

With the collapse of negotiations for a Concordat, Lloyd George's scheme for sterilizing the obnoxious features of the Education Act while carrying it out became the policy accepted by almost all Welsh Councils, and Lloyd George found himself in the position of their Commander-in-

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Chief. His word was law throughout the Principality. At the County Council elections in the spring of 1904 his supporters swept the board, almost eliminating the Tories in some counties, and in all gaining a clear majority in support of the policy of "No rates for Church Schools!"

They might well have presented an impregnable front to the Government had it not been for the recalcitrance of the Carmarthenshire Council, which flatly refused to work the Act at all. This gave Balfour an excuse for bringing in the Education (Local Authority Default) Bill—generally known as the Welsh Coercion Bill—to enable the Exchequer to pay over to school managers sums which a local authority refused to raise for them by rates, and deduct the money from the grant paid by the Treasury to the authority. Lloyd George opposed this Bill with the full support of the Liberal Party. When Balfour moved the closure in Committee on the first five lines of the Bill after a short discussion, thereby cutting out consideration of several major amendments, Lloyd George and the other Welsh Liberal members refused to leave the Chamber for the division and were named to the Speaker by the Chairman. Eventually the whole Liberal Party, headed by Asquith and Lloyd George, left the House and refused to take any further part in debate in the measure. The Coercion Bill was carried, but it remained almost a dead letter, for under Lloyd George's astute guidance the Welsh Councils mostly played a skilful part with delaying tactics, and the Tory Government did not care to hazard its crumbling popular support in an open fight with local authorities.

During these two years, 1904 and 1905, the cohesion of the Welsh under Lloyd George was so satisfactory that he again began to talk about the prospects of Welsh autonomous government. But the notion went no further than perorations. It had ceased to be a vision and had become only a dream. Eager as he was to do great things for Wales, he was growingly aware of the large extent to which the Welsh and English economies were inseparable. The Education fight might revive the notion of Welsh Home Rule, but other political issues which crowded to the fore soon thrust it aside once again.

One of these other issues, indeed, arose while the rebellion against the Education Act was at its height. Joseph Chamberlain, the most powerful personality and most acute politician in the Government, saw with dismay how fast his Party was losing ground. Nonconformists everywhere were rallying round the Liberal Party, while the traditionally Conservative working man was beginning to support the Labour movements which at that time were the close allies of Left-Wing Liberalism with its programme of social reform.

The Tories were for the time being without a popular programme with which to rally supporters. True, they had put through measures

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for the advantage of landowners, mine-owners, the Established Church, and were planning a favour for brewers and publicans. But they had no broad issue to set before the nation which would kindle enthusiasm for them and disperse the ill will roused by their Education Act and the reaction of disillusionment which had followed the South African War as the bills had to be met and the record of mismanagement and Government incompetence began to leak out.

Chamberlain remembered that in 1885, before Gladstone shattered the Liberal Party with his Home Rule policy for Ireland, the Tories had been similarly in need of a policy and some of them had raised the cry of "Fair Trade"—a pseudonym for protective tariffs—as a popular programme. In those days Chamberlain, still a Radical, had rent and torn the protectionist thesis in a series of brilliant speeches. But today he was in the Tory camp, where among the Right Wing of the Party were many who still clung with wistful affection to the old traditional faith. It is difficult to be sure how far the attractions of political expediency aided Chamberlain's conversion. What is historic is that, regardless of the arguments he had once used so devastatingly against protective tariffs, he suddenly came out in the spring of 1903 as a passionate advocate of Protection, in combination with a system of colonial preference.

The nation gasped in surprise. Except for its brief revival in 1885, the old Tory policy of Protection had been dormant since the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1845; Disraeli indeed had told his followers that it was dead and damned! Economists were practically unanimous in condemning it. To Liberals, who held in reverence the memory of Cobden and Bright, it was a thing accursed. Most of the Liberal Unionists and a number of Tories were convinced Free Traders.

Yet Chamberlain had shrewd reasons for starting this hare. The Boer War had emptied the Exchequer, and if any popular reforms were to be introduced, he must first find some additional revenue. The policy would be welcomed by those manufacturers mainly producing for the home market, and by landowners who would see in a system of colonial preference with taxes on food a prospect of rising prices for farm produce and higher rental values for farm land. As for the general public, he counted, not without reason, on the popular appeal of a cry to "Tax the Foreigner!" "Make the Foreigner Pay!" Xenophobia is a madness which it is deplorably easy to rouse. It is the evil demon that lurks under the cloak of patriotism.

Free Trade *v.* Protection at once became a front-rank issue, and Lloyd George plunged joyously into this new controversy, combining the defence of Free Trade with denunciations of the Education Acts in his incessant public speeches. He made no claim to be a professional economist and the Free Trade case was more scientifically argued in public contro-

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versy by such men as Asquith, Haldane and Birrell. But it may be doubted whether their logical ratiocinations were as convincing to the multitude as Lloyd George's humorous and homely eloquence. He took care to master his brief, as a good lawyer should, and used facts and figures with telling effect. The issue had split the Tory ranks, and Balfour was trying desperately to hold together the Free Trade and Protectionist sections. This gave Lloyd George a wide field for his biting platform wit. The Tory Party was, he said, like a worm that had been cut in half. Both ends were wriggling—blindly! Chamberlain was coasting full tilt down a hill on his bicycle, with Balfour behind in a trailer, struggling with him for possession of the brake; but they were both very near the bottom!

While the multitudes enjoyed his sallies, orthodox Free Traders winced at some of his statements, and felt that he was a dubious ally. And, indeed, Lloyd George was no meek disciple of the Manchester School of Political Economy. He did not accept the sanctity of the doctrine of *laissez-faire*. He told his hearers that he would revive agricultural prosperity, not by tariffs on foreign food, but by giving farmers greater security and fair rents, to encourage them to put all they could into the land with confidence. He would increase the sale of British goods in Britain by cheaper transit, "so that it should not cost as much and more to carry your goods from one part of the United Kingdom to another as it costs you to transport them across the ocean to New York". As for Colonial Preference, he declared that if there was any trade advantage which they could give the Colonies without detriment to their own people, the whole public opinion of this country would favour it, and properly so.

All this was rank heresy to *laissez-faire* economists. According to their theories, the landlord should be free to let his land for the highest rent he could screw out of any tenant. The railways were entitled to charge the highest rates they could induce the public to pay. The laws of supply and demand should be left to control the economic field without Government interference, and let the devil take the hindmost! But Lloyd George never accepted this cold-blooded theory. Indeed, he never allowed any theory to blind him to facts. He sought to use the power of the Government to improve the conditions of the people and to check the exploitation of the weak by the strong. He opposed protective tariffs because he saw in them a device to enable wealthy industrial interests to drive up prices and make bigger profits at the expense of the people, and to increase the landowner's wealth at the cost of dear food for the poor. It was this human aspect of the question which he put in the forefront of his Free Trade speeches.

He had no patience with Chamberlain's contention that British industry was being wrecked by foreign competition—iron and steel

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ruined, cotton gone, wool going, and so on; and gave figures to show the prosperity of our world trade, the mounting capital value of our industries and the superiority of the wages of British workers to those obtained on the Continent. "I tell you, I can't stand these people who are always running down their own country!" he exclaimed amid loud applause. But neither did he accept the orthodox doctrine that since we had Free Trade, all must necessarily be well. He agreed with Chamberlain that all was not well. The Liberal Party had indeed by its Free Trade policy filled every sea with British shipping and every land with British merchandise. Now it must defend the honour of Britain's flag to the ends of the earth by seeing that it no longer waved over dens where myriads of men, women and children of British blood were rotting in wretchedness, poverty and vice. The nation might be wealthy, but too many in it were poor.

"You cannot feed the hungry on statistics! I also," he declared, "am a protectionist. I avow myself a man who believes in protecting industry. Yes, I would protect people, not from honest labour abroad; I would protect the agricultural industry from the extortion that confiscates its improvements; I would protect the education of the sons and daughters of the people from the black sceptre of the priest; I would protect labour from the unconscionable tyranny and oppression of men of the Lord Penrhyn type. . . ."

This last reference was to the long-drawn-out stoppage at the Penrhyn slate quarries in North Wales, due to Lord Penrhyn's refusal to negotiate with the men's leaders; a stoppage which had gone on for years, causing acute distress and starvation. At one stage, in 1900, there had been rioting and Lloyd George gave his services to defend the men summoned before the court. He succeeded in getting most of them off, three only being lightly fined and none imprisoned.

By this time papers and periodicals of all party hues were agreed in predicting that the little Welsh lawyer, without wealth, family or social influence, would none the less gain a high Cabinet post in the next Liberal administration. The fact that in March, 1904, King Edward VII asked for Lloyd George to be invited to a dinner-party which he was attending strengthened the confidence of these prophets. The *Western Mail*, although politically opposed to him, wrote on 15th August, 1904:

"By common consent the man who more than any other has increased his Parliamentary reputation during the session is Mr. Lloyd George. . . . It is admitted from the Prime Minister downwards that the House of Commons has rarely possessed so brilliant a

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debater nor one so keenly alive to the prosecution of his policy and so steadfast in pursuing it at all times. . . . He has sufficiently justified his promotion to the Front Bench, He is the best fighting asset which the Radicals possess; they cannot leave him out of any Government which they form. . . . This session he has not only been the friend and confidant of every Radical leader of note, but H.M. the King has also shown sufficient interest in his personality to command his presence at Buckingham Palace."

In *London Opinion* of 24th March, 1904, he was described as "one of the few really good-looking men in the House of Commons. He has a refined, sensitive, eminently Celtic face". "He dresses well, is handsome, and has a fund of humour" was the description given by the *Daily Illustrated Mirror* a week earlier. He was always, indeed, careful to dress neatly and in good taste. As time went on he allowed himself to develop certain specialities of attire, such as his Tyrolese cloak; but while his clothes might be distinctive they were never bizarre, and their cut and quality had to be above reproach.

At his first entry into Parliament he had worn a moustache and short side-whiskers. During his Canadian trip in 1899 he shaved clean, but soon afterwards he resumed the moustache, misliking the somewhat ruthless line of his mouth which its absence revealed. Later in life, when his hair whitened, he wore it rather long, in a silvery mane. In figure he was short, and as a young man had looked rather slight and much less robust than he really was; but his torso filled out as he matured and he developed a magnificent chest. His voice was naturally sweet and musical and persuasive but not powerful. However, he took great pains with it, under the tuition of a skilled teacher of voice production, and developed it into an instrument with which he could make himself heard effectively in the largest auditorium.

Physically and mentally he was ablaze with vitality. One sometimes meets heavy, lethargic folk who seem little more than half alive. Lloyd George was at the other extreme, at least twice as much alive as most people, always alert, observant, quick in his mental processes, tireless in his activity. One of his most remarkable and useful qualities was his uncanny intuition into the thoughts and moods of those with whom he was dealing, whether individually or in the mass. This was at once the secret of his magic with an audience and of his skill in negotiation in conference. It sprang from and was allied with his deep, genuine interest in his fellows. He was quick to like people—to like them for themselves if they had qualities he could admire, even though they might be his opponents. He had a deep respect for worth of character and personality, and especially for intellect, though none for titles, wealth or social

standing. So he showed a warm and unaffected friendship for all sorts and conditions of people—for the humblest workman in his constituency as much as for the leaders of his Party, the heads of the Government or, when he came to meet him, the King at Buckingham Palace. And they in turn could not but like this inspiringly vital, sympathetic and humorous figure who could be entertaining or challenging, but was always stimulating. There was indeed one type of person who never liked or trusted him—the cold, humourless doctrinaire. These costive spirits, of whom there were a number in the Liberal Party, always felt in their bones that he was unsound. From their standpoint, no doubt he was. He was too wide in sympathy and quick in idea to keep strictly in line with doctrinaires.

While he used the light and witty banter with which he delighted his audiences in Parliament and in the country as a deadly weapon of attack, he was always careful to assemble reliable facts as the foundation of his oratory, and was never led away by his own eloquence into statements that could not be verified. An amusing instance of this occurred when he visited the Cambridge Union Society on 29th November, 1904. He was vigorously indicting the Government for its mismanagement of the Boer War, and when in his passionate attack he finally went so far as to claim that they had left this country with only two boxes of rifle ammunition, the opposition were roused by the seemingly extravagant statement to call out indignantly, "Question!"

With a smile he pulled out of his pocket the Blue Book containing the evidence given before the War Commission and read out of it the very words he had just uttered. Turning to his deflated opponents, he added that the evidence showed a similar state in regard to gun ammunition. Was that challenged? If so, he could read it too! It is not easy to upset an orator who can produce chapter and verse for every statement, however startling, and who also has, as Lloyd George had, a gift for devastating repartee when heckled.

Another front for attack on the Government was opened when on 20th April, 1904, a measure was introduced into Parliament which roused Lloyd George's Nonconformist conscience to fresh antagonism. This was the Licensing Bill, which provided that where licences to sell intoxicants were not renewed, compensation must be paid to the owner of the premises. Drunkenness, it must be remembered, was at that time a terrible national curse, and public-houses abounded. Temperance reformers were rying hard to reduce their excessive numbers, and they naturally objected to a measure which effectively blocked their efforts by turning what had been a privilege granted or withheld for a year at a time into a sort of freehold which could not be alienated without compensation. The Free Churches were almost solid in support of total abstinence, and Lloyd

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

George had made most of his early speeches on temperance platforms. He was still a practising teetotaler, and naturally played a prominent part both in Parliament and in the country in opposing this new charter to the Trade.

As if to fill up the cup of popular indignation against it, the Government also agreed under pressure from the Rand mine-owners to sanction the recruiting of indentured Chinese coolies to work the Johannesburg goldmines. The mine-owners reckoned that they would be more amenable than blacks and far less costly than white labour. So the public, which had been assured that one good result of the Boer War would be large new openings for British workers in the Transvaal, now saw that prospect disappear in favour of a system of compounds where indentured Chinese serfs would be penned like domestic work animals, conditions which in some respects bore an unpleasant resemblance to a temporary slavery. Liberals were naturally furious, for the system ran counter to all their ideals. The cry was raised of "Chinese Slavery". It was not a wholly accurate term, and Churchill would later describe it as a "terminological inexactitude"! But it was unpleasantly near the truth.

Lloyd George was of course opposed to the scheme and attacked it in the House and in speeches outside, asserting that while not slavery it was too near an approximation to it for his liking. But the Education fight and the Tariff Reform controversy were his main themes during 1904 and 1905, while the Government was steadily disintegrating at Westminster and in the country. Even *The Times* declared on 11th August, 1905:

"The Session of Parliament which comes to an end today leaves behind it a record of futile debates and disappointing achievement. . . . His (Mr. Balfour's) credit and influence are scarcely what they were even in the House of Commons, and out of doors they have certainly been impaired."

By the beginning of December, Balfour found his position hopeless. Since his Party could not agree on a programme which he could place before the country, he resigned to let the Liberals take office and fight the coming election on their policy. The Tories doubted whether Liberals had an effective policy, or were capable of forming a Cabinet that would command public confidence.

So on 5th December, the day after Balfour's resignation, King Edward VII sent for Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and appointed him Prime Minister. When he announced his Cabinet six days later, the Unionist Press reluctantly owned that he had formed a first-class team. Lloyd George, as had long been prophesied by friend and foe, stepped

#### NONCONFORMIST CONSCIENCE

straight into Cabinet rank as President of the Board of Trade. He had been offered a choice between that and the post of Postmaster-General, and though the second carried a larger salary and he was still a poor man, he did not hesitate, for the Board of Trade gave him a wider scope for constructive statesmanship.

So, after 15 years of uphill struggle, the village lad had arrived on the Treasury Bench. For the Welsh, it was seen as the well-earned accolade for their national hero. For the English, it was a portent, the significance of which, it is safe to say, was at that time recognized by none.



*Part III*

ARCHITECT OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION

1906—1914



## AT THE BOARD OF TRADE

ENTRY upon administrative office in the Liberal Cabinet was a turning-point in Lloyd George's career. In two important respects he had to re-orient his political attitude and activities.

The first and perhaps the most difficult of the new demands made on him was the necessity of acting henceforward as a member of a team. He had no past training in this role and little natural taste for it. He had missed the drilling in the team spirit which his colleagues had acquired on the football and cricket fields of their public schools. His mother had forbidden him "bandy", the local hockey game, after he had sustained an injury whilst playing it. She was always afraid that her children might hurt themselves playing rough games, and discouraged them from joining in them. Lloyd George afterwards greatly regretted this. Since boyhood he had never had time or opportunity for games until after becoming an M.P., when he took up golf; and in his schooldays at Llanystumdwy he had been a ringleader of his fellows; never one of the pack. In politics he had been a free-lance, taking his own line and propounding programmes rather than accepting them. Though a member of the Liberal Party, he had when he thought fit been ready to defy and oppose its great leader, Gladstone. He had renounced Rosebery's leadership; and had even, on occasion, insulted Campbell-Bannerman. His bold stand against the Boer War, while it demonstrated his supreme courage and sincerity, showed him also as one who would take his own line, regardless of Party policy.

Now he had to curb his restless independence and learn to adapt himself to the theory of joint Cabinet responsibility. He was ever a quick learner, and on the whole he mastered this lesson reasonably well, though it was never entirely congenial. In his early years as a Minister he was aided by the fact that his colleagues were theoretically in sympathy with the policies which he was bent on carrying out. It is not so hard to be one of a team if the others approve your course and follow your lead. Later on a time would come when this ceased to be the case. Then he found himself chafing at the bond until it broke.

A second important change imposed on him was that from being a critic of the Government to becoming a constructive legislator and administrator. That he would be capable of drafting legislation might well have been surmised from his admitted brilliance in the framing of valuable amendments and new clauses to Bills under discussion in Com-

mittee. But many of his friends and most of his opponents doubted his capacity to harness down his restless energy and combative spirit to the humdrum responsibilities of a department. How, in particular, could this fiery guerilla, this "below-the-gangway gamin", be expected to handle with discretion the nation's commercial interests? It had been widely assumed that the Prime Minister would assign him one of the posts without portfolio in which he could act as the Government's orator and debater—tasks for which his supreme ability was undoubted.

These doubts and hesitations, however, were quickly proved to be unwarranted. If Lloyd George had not learned in his youth to play, he had certainly learned to work, and his zeal for work was unquenchable. He might in some of his personal habits be rather slipshod and unbusiness-like. He was notorious for failing to deal with correspondence, and before he took office his locker used to be stuffed with unanswered letters. But that was a matter which could be and was quickly rectified, once he had risen to the dignity of having his own private secretary. Lapses such as neglect of correspondence were due not to idleness but to preoccupation with other matters in an extremely active and crowded life. As a private member Lloyd George, in addition to maintaining his solicitor's practice, had been far busier politically than the leaders of the Party, but without financial resources such as those leaders possessed with which to pay for secretarial assistance. Now, as President of the Board of Trade, with the skilled support of the Civil Service at his disposal, he was able to give his whole time to front-ranking matters without having also to be his own clerk.

The first task which faced him and his colleagues, however, was the necessity of holding a General Election to get a mandate from the country for their programme. Lloyd George flung himself with zest into this fight. He was intensely active all over the country, and was everywhere in great demand. Although he had to defend his own seat he went dashing about, speaking one day at Caernarvon, the next at Fulham, and in the following week at Croydon, Darlington, Middlesbrough and Leamington, at Mold, Holywell and Denbigh, and then doubling back to his own constituency for a final round of meetings in the dispersed Caernarvon Boroughs before polling day.

The issue, so far as he was concerned, was in no sort of doubt. He had by now become the uncrowned King of Wales, and despite the big Tory vote in the Boroughs, his election was sure. When the votes were counted on 20th January, 1906, the figures were 3,221 for him and 1,997 for Naylor, the Unionist candidate—a majority of 1,224. At the previous election he had gone in risk of assault from the other side. This time he had to remonstrate with his followers for trying to beat up the leading Tories!

In Great Britain as a whole the 1906 election was notable for the most violent swing of the political pendulum hitherto experienced. The 1900 election had given the Unionists a majority of 134, which before the dissolution had dwindled through by-elections and defections—a number of Free Trade Unionists, including Winston Churchill, had crossed the floor and joined the Liberals—to 74. The 1906 election gave the Liberal Government a majority of 354. Its 512 supporters were made up of 400 Liberals, 29 of the Labour Representation Committee (which from this time became the Labour Party) and 83 Irish Nationalists. The Conservatives were reduced to a total of 158. They failed to secure a single seat in Wales, where every constituency returned a Liberal or Labour candidate.

It was a Parliament such as Britain had never known before. The 400 Liberal members represented every variety of political outlook within their many-hued Party, from Whiggery to Radicalism, and were reinforced on the Left by the new Labour Party. There were about 200 Free Churchmen in the House—a phenomenon unknown since Cromwell's day. It is perhaps hardly surprising that reactionaries were terrified at the spectacle of this revolutionary assembly, and thanked Heaven for the House of Lords, which would be able to block any Radical legislation.

Lloyd George, on the other hand, gazed at the Upper Chamber with a bodeful eye, realizing its menace to his schemes of reform. At the head of his programme stood the amendment of the Education Act. Disestablishment of the Welsh Church came next, and various measures of social reform, especially old age pensions. But the prospect of getting any of these through the House of Lords was very discouraging, and from the first he was turning over in his mind possible methods of staging a fight with the Lords in some issue where the constitution and public opinion would be on his side.

A new Education Bill was brought in by the Government as its major measure for the first session. Augustine Birrell, the President of the Board of Education, was in charge of it, but Lloyd George took an active part in defending it in the House, for the issue was one he had made peculiarly his own, and he regarded it as for the moment even more urgent than Disestablishment. He explained indeed to a Welsh Conference that to get the schools out of the power of the Church would be a considerable measure of Disestablishment! He found, too, that he was not yet ready to frame a satisfactory Disestablishment Bill, and he induced the Cabinet to set up a Royal Commission to investigate the facts about the Welsh Church, its numbers, the age and nature of its various endowments and so on, in order that the Bill when framed should be firmly based. This was profoundly, if unexpectedly, characteristic of him. Those who thought of him as a fiery and seemingly irresponsible political agitator did not know how meticulously careful he always was to verify his facts

before making a statement. An illustration of this had occurred some six years before, when he was attacking Chamberlain in the House of Commons over his family's shares in Kynochs. Figures had been given in a newspaper about the holdings, and one of them was inaccurate. L.G. sent his clerk to verify the figures at Somerset House, and was already on his feet in Parliament when a slip was passed to him with the correction. Chamberlain, who knew of the error, was leaning forward, waiting to pounce on him as he came to the erroneous figure. He passed it over, and his baffled antagonist recoiled in impotent fury.

In addition to speaking in the House and the country in support of the Education Bill, L.G. took steps to organize Welsh educational policy. He induced the Lord Mayor of Cardiff to summon a Welsh National Conference on 23rd March, 1906, at which he persuaded the representatives of Welsh County Councils and Education Authorities to agree to form a National Council for the control of education in Wales and Monmouthshire. Later he added amendments to the Education Bill to authorize placing the control of Welsh education in the hands of this Council.

Officially, of course, these were outside interests, for his ministerial duties were the affairs of the Board of Trade. Under his immediate predecessors the Board had been rather aimless and ineffective; and for the previous three or four years it had been virtually hamstrung by the divided views of the Tory Government about fiscal policy. Lloyd George set his quick intellect to study and master the functions of his new charge, and found that there was a great deal waiting to be done. It was a very different part of the field of public affairs from that in which he had hitherto been mainly interested. Its immediate issues were practical matters of business rather than issues of party strife—once the tariff reform dispute had been set aside. Its concerns were many and miscellaneous. They included such diverse matters as shipping, docks and harbours, railways, tramways, electric light undertakings, mines, patents, bankruptcy and company laws. For some of these, legislative or administrative reforms were long overdue.

The most urgent task was the preparation of a Bill to deal with British Merchant Shipping. He knew a good deal more about this than might have been supposed, for in his part of Caernarvonshire there was hardly a single village home that had not sent one or more of its sons to serve in the Mercantile Marine. He had heard from his boyhood the tales of their experiences and hardships. Now he had the chance to improve their lot. Conditions on many British ships were very bad. The food was inferior and inadequate—measly pork and weevilly biscuits. The sailors' quarters were foul and cramped. Crews were often poorly paid, and men might be abandoned in foreign ports without redress. Owners sometimes undermanned their vessels, and recruited cheap foreign labour—men who

spoke no English and could not understand orders. Overloading had been checked in British ships by the introduction of the Plimsoll line, but ship-owners complained that foreign vessels did not have to observe this regulation and reaped an advantage against them, even in British ports.

Lloyd George set himself to deal with these problems. But before framing his Bill he took the novel course of calling into conference the representatives of both owners and men, and talking over with them the provisions he proposed to enact. The owners were extremely suspicious of this Radical legislator, but found him, to their surprised delight, not only very well-informed about their affairs but remarkably understanding and conciliatory. The result was that he succeeded in getting substantial agreement in advance from all parties, and his Bill had a smooth passage through Parliament. It was a bold and far-reaching measure. It protected the seaman by laying down fixed standards of food and accommodation, requiring a certified cook to be carried, ensuring medical attention and the right to repatriation if a man was discharged abroad. Sailors could allot money out of their wages to their wives and families while on a voyage. Foreign seamen could only be engaged if they had a sufficient knowledge of English. Only British subjects could hold pilotage certificates for British ports. Shipowners benefited by the provision that the Plimsoll line, slightly raised, was made obligatory on any foreign vessel entering British ports, and foreign passenger boats plying to the United Kingdom were required to observe the same standards of accommodation and sanitation as were laid down for British ships. Obsolete regulations about deck cargoes and passenger decks were revised. Advisory Committees representing shipowners, shipbuilders and seamen were set up to assist the Board of Trade in framing rules and regulations affecting them. As Lloyd George explained to his audience at the Annual Dinner of the *Shipping Gazette* on 20th November, 1906:

“Once you deal with a subject, you are not likely to get the House of Commons to face it again for some years! Therefore it is much better to incorporate all your grievances in one Bill, rather than to wait for the millennium. That is the course we took here. We consulted the whole shipping interest and got very admirable assistance from them as to what they would like to include in the Bill, and also as to the grievances which they desired to have remedied.”

His combination of sweet reasonableness in conference with resolute energy in carrying through a body of practical and enlightened reforms won for Lloyd George golden opinions from the mercantile community. His only critics were certain sour purists of the Manchester School of political economy, who held that his imposition on foreign vessels of the

safety regulations laid down for British craft was a departure from *laissez faire* principles and smacked of Protection!

Before long he shocked those doctrinaires further, for his next major Bill, introduced in March 1907, was the Patents and Designs (Amendment) Bill. This measure, which carried out a large number of much-needed reforms in Patent Law, protected British manufacturers against the foreigners' trick of taking out patents in Britain for processes which they then worked mainly or exclusively abroad. Some 44% of the British patents granted in 1906 had been taken out by foreigners, and about 95% of the patents for the manufacture of dyes were held by them—mostly operated only abroad. British manufacturers were being blackmailed by foreign holders of British patents covering any process or bit of machinery they wanted to use. Lloyd George laid it down in his Bill that a British patent could only be retained to protect a manufacture carried on in Britain; otherwise it could be revoked on an appeal to the Comptroller. This patriotic bias in commercial legislation was regarded by free-trade fundamentalists as black heresy—the sin of Achan. Thus early the whisper began to spread among a certain section of costive Liberals that L.G., though an almost indecently clever little fellow, was not altogether sound. It was a whisper which pursued him underground for the rest of his career. There are those to whom witch-smelling and heresy-hunting are the most thrilling of sports.

It was not unnatural that Lloyd George should rouse the suspicions of such people, for he was always ready to pursue by any practicable road the object on which he was set. His principles were concrete, not abstract; they were, in fact, aims rather than theoretic principles. Orthodoxy held no sway over his mind. Perhaps he had been overdosed with it in his childhood, reared as he was in the strictest sect of Calvinistic doctrine, and had become allergic to it. So he never troubled whether a proposal was "sound" by some abstract standard, but only whether it was beneficial. He was too dynamic to worship consistency, for life, unlike logic, is bewilderingly inconsistent and spreads out into infinite contradictions.

The Board of Trade responded to his impulse and roused itself into novel activities on behalf of British commerce. In May 1906 he brought forward a Bill to empower the Board to take in 1908 a Census of Production based on the results of 1907 and to take similar censuses from time to time thereafter. This was the first such census to be taken, and it and subsequent censuses have been of immense value alike to Governments and to business interests in furnishing information about the nation's industrial output. It was a characteristic measure; Lloyd George hated "muddling through"; his method was to find out the facts as a basis for policy.

Among other matters which he was quick to tackle came the question of liaison with British consuls abroad. They were under the Foreign Office,

not the Board of Trade, though their main functions were commercial service; and hitherto their reports on business conditions had habitually lingered in the Foreign Office till they were out-of-date and useless. Lloyd George made arrangements whereby all information of commercial value sent in by the consuls should be instantly passed over to the Board, which would transmit it in turn to Chambers of Commerce, and, via the *Board of Trade Journal*, to the business community at large. He appointed a Commission to inquire into lighthouse administration. He carried the Companies Act, 1907, amending the law regarding Limited Liability Companies. The *Economist* declared that "Mr. Lloyd George has developed an unexpected genius for commercial legislation", and the *Lancashire Daily Post* admitted that "traders have never had a more accessible and abler President of the Board of Trade to deal with". Before long his bitterest political opponents—including even the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce—were hailing him as the ablest Minister who had ever presided over the Board.

Reviewing his achievements during the first two sessions, the *Leicester Daily Post* of 13th September, 1907, said:

"The record, thanks to the conspicuous ability, active initiative and fertility of resource of Mr. Lloyd George, has been remarkably rich. Whether we turn to its remarkable enterprise in administration, or to its rapid headway in legislation, its retrospect is alike comprehensive and gratifying. Had the Minister done no more than pass his Patents and Designs Act, this year, he would have earned the thanks of all interested in the prosperity of our commerce. . . . This invaluable Act, happily, has been supplemented by others amending the law as to limited liability companies, partnerships, employers' liability insurance companies, and merchant shipping. . . . It is only, however, when we turn to his many and varied achievements in the sphere of administration that his entire claims to confidence and thanks can be recognized. These have included improvements in the operation of the Shipping Act; in railway and canal management; in the hours of work of railway servants; in Consular reports and the Consular service; in the arrangements relating to commercial attachés; in the commercial representation of the Mother Country in the self-governing colonies; in special negotiations with foreign countries; and in amendments of the Bankruptcy Law. These and other subjects, which have occupied the Board of Trade since the present Government took office, will convey some conception of its vast scope and prolific activity. One can scarcely be surprised, therefore, that the President has made his mark on our commercial interests, and has evoked the cordial praise of both political opponents and friends."

Sir William Lyne, the Australian Minister of Trade and Customs, who came to London in 1907 for the Imperial Conference, declared on his return, "If I had to pick the most practical constructive statesman out of the British Cabinet, Mr. Lloyd George would be the man!"

The qualities displayed by the President of the Board of Trade were a surprise to friend and foe alike. Thus the *Manchester Guardian* could write:

"We have still a few illusions left—the illusion, for instance, that there was something almost uncanny, something incompatible with his intrepidity as a fighting man, in the exceptional administrative skill exhibited by Mr. Lloyd George since he went to the Board of Trade, or in the constructive talent combined with persuasive advocacy which has enabled the same Minister this session to reap so bountiful a legislative harvest."

While *The Times* noted that:

"Side by side with the irresponsible partisan has grown up a new Mr. Lloyd George, the first taste of whose more sober and statesman-like qualities was given to the House of Commons in his conduct of the Merchant Shipping Bill. . . ."

It added in comment on his programme of further legislation:

"With many of the changes indicated by Mr. Lloyd George we can only express our entire concurrence, and our hope that he will lose no time in giving them effect. . . . These are all welcome announcements of reforms only too long delayed."

Before long his skill in negotiation was subjected to a drastic test. Trouble had been brewing for a long time among the railwaymen, who had accumulated a number of grievances for which they were unable to get any satisfaction from the company directors. By the autumn they had reached the stage of preparing to call a general railway strike. This would have inflicted incalculable loss, privation and suffering on the whole community, whatever its ultimate issue, and have given a setback to British trade that might have been felt for years. But owners and men were alike obdurate and unyielding, and the calamity seemed inevitable.

Lloyd George offered to try his hand at a settlement. He summoned the railway directors, railway managers and the men's representatives on 25th October, 1907, to a conference. They met in a suspicious and

intransigent mood; the men stubbornly resolved not to abate their claims, the owners doubting the wisdom of having any parley with the little Welsh Radical. At that time the Victorian tradition still lingered that employers had an absolute right to impose whatever terms they chose as to the conditions on which they would employ labour, the only controlling factor being the law of Supply and Demand. Workers were increasingly rebellious against that pitiless creed; but industrial legislation to modify it was as yet only fragmentary.

Lloyd George opened the conference with an address so wise in its review of the situation and its suggestions for dealing with it that he disarmed the hostility of both sides, and a substantial measure of agreement was at once forthcoming. Not only did he make a convincing case for coming to terms; he brought out a proposal which was worked over and completed in further meetings for setting up Conciliation Boards to examine and furnish solutions for all the issues in dispute, thus providing a bridge by which employers and men could come together without either side appearing to give in to the other. Before the first conference ended a settlement which would avert the imminent railway strike was well on the way.

The impression he made on the railway directors was expressed in a note which Sir Herbert Maxwell wrote to him that afternoon:

"23, Cumberland Mansions, W.

"25 Oct. 1907.

"Dear Mr. Lloyd George,

"Will you allow me, as an old political opponent, to express my sense of the tactful and considerate manner in which you dealt with the difficult subject of this morning's conference. There could not have been expressed a more comprehensive *aperçu* of the situation than you gave in your address; and, whatever be the upshot, I shall always retain a cordial appreciation of your endeavour to maintain harmony between the classes concerned.

"I purposely use the first person singular, not to indicate that this impression was confined to myself, but because I am not entitled to speak for others.

"Of course this requires no reply.

"I am,

"Yours truly,

"HERBERT MAXWELL."

Another of the railway directors sent him next day a note giving further inside information about their reactions to the Conference, saying:

"My dear George,

"This is for yourself alone. We all went to Charing Cross for lunch and discussion, and without being optimistic, I can say that the tone of our conversation was hopeful. We all acknowledged that you had put the matter extremely well before us and in a most conciliatory spirit. We (as you know) appointed 6 to deal with you and Grant as Sec. Scotter and Paget and Benson and others were distinctly friendly. I think your trouble will be with Allerton. I quite agree with you, that whether you are right in your estimate of the number affected, in case of a strike, or the Companies (and my own opinion is and always has been that our figures are fallacious), the inconvenience to put it mildly will be to the Public terrible. Some of our number thought that you wished to drag it on, until Parliament met! I don't. Banbury is poking Allerton. Maxwell is with me."

Lloyd George went down for the week-end to Brighton to stay with friends, making it a condition that his host's motor should be available to dash him back to his office if the crisis took a sudden new turn. Notes followed him from several of his Cabinet colleagues, congratulating him on the successful start of his negotiations. The Prime Minister sent him a card:

"Heartily congratulate you on report you are able to give of Conference. It is very good news indeed.

"H. C.-B."

Sir Edward Grey wrote:

"If you settle this dispute by bringing the Directors and Bell" (the Railwaymen's Union leader) "into line it will be a great personal success for which everybody will be most grateful to you. Your colleagues especially will admire it, for they know most of the difficulties in your way."

Haldane wrote:

"Most satisfactory. You have accomplished a great deal in getting things thus far. The first step is not the only one that counts but in this kind of negotiation it counts for a great deal and I congratulate you."

The discussions were resumed in the following week and continued till agreement was reached. On 6th November it was publicly announced that the railway dispute had been settled. Speaking at the Guildhall at the

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Lord Mayor's banquet three days later, the Prime Minister expressed the nation's joy at the passing of the crisis, adding:

"Our burden was lightened by the knowledge that my friend and colleague Mr. Lloyd George was bringing to bear on the situation, which indeed appeared at one time to be almost intractable, his great gifts of unconquerable hopefulness, of unfailing courage, and of alert diplomacy; and we see the result in the occurrences of the last few days."

Before that month was out, Lloyd George suffered the bitterest personal bereavement of his life. On 30th November his eldest daughter Mair died of appendicitis. Lloyd George adored her. He was always far fonder of girls than of boys and had been considerably disappointed that his first-born was a son. Mair was his darling; a beautiful and sweet-natured girl, then just turned 17. When she died, Lloyd George nearly went mad with grief. He would not go home, but slept at the office, and his devoted secretary, Willie Clark,\* slept there with him, fearing for L.G.'s reason or that he might do himself some violence, so intense was his grief. It was doubtless well for him that he had to hurry off from her graveside to deal with a violent dispute which had arisen in the cotton industry and was threatening to cause a widespread stoppage. He brought to bear on it the same skill in handling employers and workers as he had used over the railway crisis, and with a like success. The distraction which this task furnished saved his reason, but did not heal the wound.

Letters of condolence poured in on him from his friends and colleagues. One was from his former antagonist, the Bishop of St. Asaph, who wrote with the experience of a similar loss:

"The Palace, St. Asaph.

"Dec. 12, 1907.

"My dear George,

"I have not written, I feared to seem intruding. You have, however, rarely been out of my thoughts and my heart has gone out to you with the inly touch of a sympathy, born of our partnership in sorrow. I know how great your loss is. I shall not soon forget her face. Death cannot rob us of the memory and the spirit of such a presence. But after all the iron fact remains. When the blow first falls, the hot tears that flow bring some relief but these pass and the dull, heavy blight is there and there always. I don't want to talk about myself but I give you just what I have felt and found, with the hope that it may be of help and, I would too, of comfort to you.

\*Now Sir William Clark, G.C.M.G., K.C.S.I.

"For the sake of the children we all went away at once. I think it helped them and the sight of their being helped was some comfort. I found being with my own was what was best for me—at any rate at first. Work brought me home soon and work like duty bids you 'march on'.

"But I fancy you must need rest and change at this moment. I thought it brave and wise of you to plunge at once into work—work which happily gave peace to others. If I may presume to say it, change—with companions *who will not jar*—would help you. I have had by me one or other of my sons and this *has* been a help.

"I wish I could be of any comfort and help personally. I would gladly be so, if I could. Two thoughts have come often to me. I have dear friends who have lost their only child and yet they go on bravely doing their duty. Then there is a thought which it would be unreal to pass over. The 'sure and certain hope' has buoyed me up.

"Give, please, my kindest remembrances and sympathy to Mrs. George and believe me,

"Yours in sorrow as in joy,

"A. G. ASAPH."

It is interesting to note that twenty years later Lloyd George in turn drew from his own experience a message of sympathy to Tom Shaw, M.P., on the death of his daughter.

"25, Old Queen Street, S.W.1.

"March 23rd, 1927.

"Dear Shaw,

"As one who has passed through the same sorrow as you are now experiencing, I feel I must tell you how deeply I sympathize with you in your anguish. I lost a daughter of great charm and promise when she had reached her eighteenth year. I know how terrible must be your grief to have one so dear to your heart torn away at a moment when her great gifts were reaching maturity.

"Words of sympathy cannot assuage so intense a pain, but may I give one word drawn from my own experience which I hope may be of some use. In these calamities one is apt to dwell almost morbidly on what might have been. It adds to the poignancy of one's loss. A distinguished man who was a good friend of mine advised me 'not to press the spear to my breast'. It was good counsel and it helped me to reach the shores of sanity and restraint of which I was in danger temporarily of losing sight.

"My wife wishes to join me in a heartfelt sympathy with you and the grief-stricken mother.

"Ever sincerely,

"D. L. G."

At the time, however, he had a hard struggle to reach those "shores of sanity and restraint". He would not return to the Wandsworth home that now housed so tragic a memory for him. As soon as he could he went off for a holiday in the south of France, taking with him—perhaps on the Bishop's advice—his two boys. He wrote inviting the Bishop to join him but St. Asaph could not manage it. During his absence a lease was negotiated of a house in Cheyne Place, Chelsea, to which the home was moved. An elaborate marble memorial was erected to Mair in the graveyard on the hill slope of Criccieth, but for many years Lloyd George could not bear that people should mention her to him, or play Handel's "Largo", her favourite tune, which she had been wont to play to him on peaceful evenings at home.

In mid-January he returned to England to resume his activities at the Board of Trade and to take up residence in the strange new home. A home often means more to a woman than to a man, and in this respect the Lloyd Georges were not exceptional. Mrs. Lloyd George loved her home. She was by instinct a home-maker and mother. Domestic interests took the first place with her. When her husband was away her letters to him, even at times of the most desperate political or national crisis, were entirely concerned with small chat about the family, the affairs of friends and details of household management. But Lloyd George had never allowed the home tie to dominate his conduct. His home served to sleep in when work was done, or return to from his political expeditions. Unhandy and useless about the house, he did not dabble in domesticity. The house was his wife's far more than his. Now, with the shadow of his bereavement new-fallen upon him, he was less firmly than ever attached to his unfamiliar dwelling. In after years he would ascribe his success in large measure to the fact that he never submitted to be shackled to his home. He would quote the fate of one of his friends who after great promise made no headway, because he was always hurrying home instead of staying with his political comrades to attend meetings or discuss current problems and plans. If in truth Lloyd George's progress was in some measure attributable to his readiness to escape from his home, then the loss of Mair took its place in the chain of his destiny.

As for his wife, she had long since discovered that her married life with this handsome, impetuous, quick-tempered and restlessly active husband was to be no slippered companionship beside the family hearth. Even in the early days he had been flying about the country, pursuing legal business and political campaigns. At first he had been in the habit of discussing his speeches with her before making them, and had been anxious to have her criticisms and suggestions. But as time went on she became inevitably more preoccupied with her growing family and her housekeeping problems, while Lloyd George's broadening political horizon

stretched away beyond the familiar circle of Welsh Nationalist questions with which she was familiar. He was becoming more and more a public figure, less and less her private possession. He was still her man, and the finest ever bred in Wales, even though he might be petulant and irascible at times, and fuss about affairs that did not interest her. She grew to mother her impatient mate, to keep a warm hearth for him when he should deign to return from his political bustlings. These she viewed with a growing detachment, that turned in later years into a vague antagonism. But in the early days of his Cabinet career her pride in his broadening success, and also the share of attention which she herself received as a result, were some compensation for the lengthening distances he wandered from her side.

His reputation by now stood very high. The *British Weekly* of 26th December, 1907, reviewing the year's record, wrote that

"the effect of the year upon political reputations has not been great, except in the case of Mr. Lloyd George. Opportunity came his way, and he seized it. Thus observers who, last Christmas, said he might win the second place but would never reach the first are now less disposed to set limits to his career."

Sir William Holland and Lord Glantawe wrote to *The Times*, urging that the salary of the President of the Board of Trade should be raised from £2,000 to £5,000 a year. It was a very welcome suggestion to Lloyd George, dependent as he was on his salary, and he quietly sounded the Chancellor on the subject. A rumour of this reached the ears of Walter Runciman, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, who wrote to him in some indignation:

"I had expected that even if you did not tell me as a colleague, you would have said something about the subject as a friend. Our friendly and at times quite intimate connection led me to think that you would not leave other people to post me in what you were doing through the Treasury. Let me say very frankly that I should be sorry to take this as a sign of lack of confidence or a waning of your intimacy with me—even in a matter of a more or less personal character."

Lloyd George's biggest achievement at the Board of Trade was the creation of the Port of London Authority. He started work on it soon after getting to the Board, but found it extremely difficult to induce the multitude of parties holding rights or interests in the Port to surrender them to the control of a single authority. In November 1906 he told his audience at the *Shipping Gazette* Dinner that "of all the problems which

have ever baffled the head of a poor Minister, nothing has been suggested yet which comes up to the Port of London question". He added that it would take another year at least to settle his plans, for "it is far better that you should take another twelve months to get these gentlemen to knock their heads together somehow, and to arrive at some sort of common understanding, before you deal with it, than that you should hurriedly plant on the table of the House of Commons an ill-considered scheme, which in the long run will not only do no good, but may do harm."

By the spring of 1908 that tactful and conciliatory method of handling the issue had borne fruit in a substantial measure of agreement among the conflicting interests which divided control of the Port of London, and Lloyd George was able on 2nd April to table his Port of London Bill. Like his earlier measures, it got a warm welcome on both sides of the House and was greeted as a masterly achievement. In due course it passed smoothly to the Statute Book.

Meantime his Welsh supporters watched his progress with some bewilderment. These non-party triumphs of administration and commercial legislation were all very well, but what about Welsh Disestablishment, Education, Land Reform?

He had not forgotten these issues. But in office he had quickly learned that an Act of Parliament cannot be framed as easily as a debating society resolution. Disestablishment had to wait for the report of the Welsh Church Commission, on which its terms must be based. The Liberal Government's attempt to revise the 1902 Education Act had foundered on the rock of the House of Lords, where their Bill had been so badly mutilated that they had to abandon it. Its fate taught Lloyd George that there could be little hope for Disestablishment or Home Rule or any other major reform measure in the Liberal programme while the Upper Chamber retained its power of veto. To deal with that issue became his long-term purpose. Meanwhile he certainly found some consolation in being able to get ahead with his commercial measures. Like most great men, he tended to concentrate intensely on the matter in hand, whatever it was.

From the beginning of 1907, Lloyd George's speeches in the country were studded with warnings that the House of Lords would have to be dealt with before there could be a hope of Welsh Disestablishment. But the Welsh grew impatient as a second year of Liberal Government wore on with no sign of this Bill, and in October a big Nonconformist Convention was held at Cardiff, with the purpose of staging an open revolt against the Welsh members for their failure to press Disestablishment to the forefront. So Lloyd George went down to that Convention and talked to it. He could win any audience that gave him a hearing. With

a Welsh audience he was irresistible. The assembly which had met in angry mood to denounce him broke up the conclusion of his speech by leaping to its feet and cheering him in a frenzy of enthusiasm.

His stock in Wales stood very high. On 24th January, 1908, he received the Honorary Freedom of Cardiff, the biggest city of Wales, whose leaders, irrespective of party, delighted to do him honour. He even had to kick off next day at the Cardiff-Blackheath football match. His own people presented him on 13th March with the Freedom of Caernarvon—an honour of which he was the third recipient. Earlier still he had been made a Freeman of Pwllheli; and these three Welsh towns were the first in an extremely long list of towns which in the course of the next dozen years would invite him to inscribe his name on their roll of Freemen.

If his work at the Board of Trade had been largely non-controversial, Lloyd George had been very active in the Cabinet in pressing forward the introduction of Liberal reforms—such as education, licensing, small-holdings, Trade Union emancipation, the Children's Act—and had been a most popular and effective party spokesman on their behalf, in Parliament and the country. Now Destiny moved him on to a position where he would be able to use his influence still more powerfully.

The Premier, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, had been for some time in failing health, and on 6th April, 1908 he tendered his resignation to the King and advised him to send for the Chancellor, H. H. Asquith. It was the obvious choice. Asquith had long been an outstanding leader of Liberals, and as Chancellor stood in the position which traditionally was next to the Prime Minister. In the reconstructed Ministry Lloyd George now stepped up to the Exchequer. He, too, was the obvious choice. Not only had he long been the Liberals' foremost fighting spokesman and debater; he had in office established an unrivalled reputation as a statesman of outstanding energy and capacity. So he passed over the heads of such well-known Liberal leaders as Sir Edward Grey, Haldane, Morley and Birrell, as well as the younger figures of McKenna, Runciman, Herbert Gladstone and Sydney Buxton, to the post of Second-in-Command of the Government.



[By courtesy of "Vanity Fair"]

A Nonconformist genius: cartoon by "Spy"



*[Photograph by J Allen Jones, Criccieth*

The Chancellor of the Exchequer and his family

## CHAPTER X

### THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET

LOYD GEORGE'S remarkable success at the Board of Trade had built up for him a reputation for statesmanship which was as freely acknowledged by his opponents as by his friends. "No better man could be found for the post," said *The Times* when he was promoted to the Exchequer. He had shown his grasp of the truth that while you need see only one side in a fight, you must see both sides in a settlement. His major measures, the Merchant Shipping, Companies, Patents, and Port of London Acts, had all been brought in after conciliatory negotiations with the interests concerned, and had been in effect agreed measures. When he left the Board he was planning to nationalize the railways, and no doubt would have so conducted the affair as to carry this, too, with public approval. But Churchill, who took over the Board from him, was disinclined to spend his energies on a second-hand plan; nor indeed did he possess that magic touch of L.G. in negotiation which would have induced in the railway authorities a conviction that they were almost the authors of the scheme discussed with them. So railway nationalization had to wait for another forty years.

The Tories eyed him covetously. He was obviously no coldly academic Liberal doctrinaire, and his Merchant Shipping and Patents Acts reeked of protectionist heresy to the high priests of Cobdenism. Nor was he a rootless internationalist, for his speeches revealed an ardent patriotism. True, it was primarily Welsh patriotism, but when turned on a wider horizon it became a healthy pride in the British Empire, in British dominance of world shipping and world trade, and British influence in world affairs. What an asset he could be if, like his predecessor, Joseph Chamberlain, he could be brought over to the Tory fold! They showed a marked tendency to cultivate him and treated him in the House with friendly approbation.

Lloyd George himself, however, had no notion of changing sides. His own trade legislation had been markedly successful, and the first measures of social legislation in which he was keenly interested, such as the Trades Disputes Act, Workmen's Compensation, Agricultural Holdings, School Meals, Small Holdings and Allotments, Factory and Workshops Acts, had also safely reached the Statute Book. But the major issues to which he had been vowed from youth—Disestablishment, Education, Temperance Reform, Home Rule, Land and Leasehold Reform—were still in the shadows. A succession of Education Bills had

been thrown out by the House of Lords, which was preparing to block the Licensing Bill, and could be relied on to give the same treatment to Disestablishment and Home Rule when they were brought forward. It was indeed the openly avowed policy of Lord Lansdowne, the Tory leader in the Lords, to nullify his party's defeat in the General Election by quashing the Liberal Government's Bills dealing with the very issues on which they had won their victory.

To Lloyd George it was clear that there must be a fight to curb the Lords' power of veto. But he was not prone to the dangerous miscalculation of wishful thinking, and he did not deceive himself into supposing that rates for Church Schools or reduction of public-house licences, however hotly he and some of his friends thought about them, were issues that would rouse the mass of the nation to a constitutional revolution. "Resign and appeal to the electorate!" taunted the Tories when successive Education Bills were thrown out by the Lords. "If a dissolution comes," retorted L.G., "it will be a much larger measure than the Education Bill that will come up for consideration, if the House of Lords persists in its present policy!" He was restlessly devising how to shape that larger measure. There was need, for the Liberal Government was losing ground. A frustrate Administration may invite sympathy, but it hardly rallies confidence.

His transfer to the Exchequer brought Lloyd George the chance to carry through immediately one task for which he was particularly fitted and in which he had the most intense concern. The 1908 Budget had already been framed by Asquith, and although he was now Premier he took charge of its introduction and the Second Reading debate on the Finance Bill, handing over the subsequent discussions in Committee and on Report and Third Reading to Lloyd George. But Asquith had also drafted the long-awaited Bill for Old Age Pensions—a measure in which L.G. was passionately interested, and one which he had been insistently urging within the Cabinet. If Asquith, as Chancellor, had been officially responsible for its preparation, it was also very much Lloyd George's baby; indeed, he had been an active member of two Committees appointed by the Unionist Government some years earlier to study the problem, and had never ceased to press for the enactment of Pensions. Now it fell to him to pilot the Bill through the Commons, which he did with the skill and conciliatory tact he had already displayed in the handling of his trade legislation. Partly in consequence of this, and of the friendly attitude which the Tories were at that time showing him, the Bill had a swift and successful journey through both Houses, though alarm was expressed in the Lords at the menace to thrift which these pensions would create.

Thus was attained the first of the series of Social Reform enactments

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with which Lloyd George's name is specially associated. The Pensions were non-contributory—inevitably so, if they were to be immediately beneficial, for as yet there was no scheme of national insurance operating on a contributory basis with which they could be linked, although Lloyd George announced that he purposed to introduce one soon—and they were therefore protected by a means test. They proved an immense boon to large numbers of old folk who had hitherto foreseen no future outside the poor-house. In the mouths of thousands the "Lloyd-George" became the name for their pension, as later it would be used for the sickness or maternity benefit money they drew under his National Insurance Act.

Lloyd George's title to the credit he received for Old Age Pensions has been disputed by some, who claim that it should properly belong to Asquith, the actual drafter of the Bill. No doubt Asquith deserved a large measure of credit; nor should the Cabinet which decided on the step be altogether omitted from praise and especially Campbell-Bannerman, the Prime Minister when the legislation was determined. But popular instinct has been right in this matter. It recognized in Lloyd George the man who chiefly inspired and fought for the complex of progressive and ameliorative social legislation carried by the Liberal Government between 1906 and 1914, of which Old Age Pensions, actually piloted by him through Parliament, was one of the biggest items. If chance gave him that special public association with the Bill, he was in fact identified with it by more than chance.

Pensions had to be not only carried but paid for. In the 1908 Budget, £1½ millions were provided for their cost in the first quarter of 1909; but in the following financial year they would cost six million pounds, which Lloyd George, as Chancellor, must find. He scanned the financial horizon for prospects of raising—or saving—the money.

The biggest single item in the Budget was expenditure on the Navy, which in 1908 jumped by another £900,000. Lloyd George always had in peacetime an incurable dislike for spending money on warlike preparations—a dislike which must have been implanted in him by very early training, for he was no pacifist, and was the reverse of niggardly in such expenditure when war actually came. Indeed, his whole attitude to war seemed a tissue of contradictions. No man was more pugnacious; none who, on behalf of a cause he had espoused, could be more bellicose. He revelled in histories of warfare. He gloried openly in the fighting record of his own Welsh people. He thrilled to the tale of conflicts waged for freedom and justice. Yet if his spirit was combative, his judgment favoured conciliation, for which he had a natural genius. War, he knew, guaranteed no sure victory to freedom or to justice, and his good sense warned him to seek them, if possible, by reason and conference. In time

of peace his abhorrence of militarism might easily be misinterpreted as the piping of a pacifist.

In 1908 the world seemed deeply settled in peace. There had been no war in Europe for more than a generation; no European war in which Britain had participated for half a century. Armaments seemed an anachronism. Why not save money on the Navy and use it for Pensions?

The difficulty was that the German Emperor had started to build up a big German navy, which could have no other object than to challenge the hitherto undisputed sovereignty of Britannia at sea. We had to increase our own naval construction in order to keep ahead. This was a costly business, though Lloyd George never questioned its necessity. The Fleet was our first and indeed our sole line of defence; and command of the sea at that time gave this island complete security.

We could and would always outbuild Germany. But the Kaiser's futile naval rivalry was breeding suspicion and enmity between the two countries, besides costing the Exchequer a lot of money which Lloyd George could put to more kindly use. So he made an effort to persuade the German Government to agree to a slowing-down of the pace of naval construction on both sides. With this object he arranged for Sir Edward Grey to invite him and Count Metternich, the German Ambassador, to lunch on a couple of days in July 1908. He has reproduced in his *War Memoirs* the account of these interviews which the Count sent to his Imperial Master, along with the Kaiser's irate marginal annotations on the reports. The tone of those annotations, which sink at times to coarsest abuse, makes it clear that there was no hope, either then or later, of diverting Wilhelm II from his resolve to break British supremacy at sea. L.G. did not get a sight of those documents for another twenty years, but he realized forthwith that there was no immediate prospect of being able to cut the Navy Estimates.

He had, however, a second purpose in seeing Metternich. A system of social insurance was already working in Germany; and as he was planning to introduce a scheme on rather similar lines into Britain, he wanted to visit the Reich and gather full information at first hand about the German mode of operating their scheme. He discussed his intention with the German Ambassador, and carried out his visit in the following month of August, travelling with a small party as guests of Charles Henry, a Liberal M.P. who knew Germany well. Afterwards he was told that this was a blunder, for Henry was a Jew, and even at that time Jews were ostracized in German Society.

Lloyd George had been promised an interview with the Kaiser, but no invitation materialized, for the German Chancellor had been warned in time by Metternich that the Welshman would certainly talk about naval limitation, and if the Kaiser used to him the arrogant tone of his

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written comments there would be some disrespectful plain speaking by his visitor. However, the Vice-Chancellor, von Bethmann-Hollweg, received Lloyd George and gave him full details of the German State Insurance Scheme.

A banquet was also arranged in the visitor's honour in the big hall of the Berlin Zoo. Here, over the beer, which, to L.G.'s surprise, was served in large quantities as a sequel to the champagne that had been drunk at dinner, von Bethmann-Hollweg became vehement about Britain's encirclement of Germany. This was a constant complaint in the Fatherland in the years before the First World War. Britain, as a great mercantile nation, was anxious to keep the world at peace. Outside Europe, she was able to enforce the Pax Britannica through her naval command of the seas. On the Continent, her traditional policy was to cultivate the Balance of Power so as to prevent aggressive war by any country on its neighbour. To this end she had developed four years earlier the Entente Cordiale with France, and was now feeling her way to an understanding with Russia as a counterpoise to the strength of the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. But Prussia, which had in 1871 bound the rest of the German states into an Empire under the Prussian King, was burning to expand her world influence and territory, and chafed angrily at the restraints imposed on her by the British Navy and British diplomacy. The Prussians were a militarist race by nature and tradition, who had risen to Empire by the sword, not the counting-house, and dreamed of carving their way by the same means to world domination. The thought of the ruin and distress they might cause in the process gave them no qualms. Lloyd George was puzzled and alarmed by this very unfamiliar atmosphere, of which he got several whiffs during his German tour. He was amazed at the delirium of patriotic grief which he witnessed in a crowd at Stuttgart, where just before his arrival an early Zeppelin had crashed on her trial trip. He brought back from Germany not only much valuable information for his insurance plans, but an awakened sense of peril creeping about under the polished surface of European relations.

For the time being, however, he had to turn his mind to the more immediate problem of how to stage that fight with the House of Lords which must somehow be won before there could be a hope of carrying Welsh Disestablishment and other measures of social and electoral reform. Speaking at Swansea on 1st October, 1908, he declared:

"If, through the mischievous obstruction of an irresponsible and selfish assembly, we fail to establish liberty of conscience in every State school in the land, to extend a larger measure of protection to the homes of the people against the inroads of drink, to equip

our municipal institutions with the means of improving the homes in which the children of the nation are reared, to extend equal rights of citizenship to all who contribute their best of strength and skill to the common stock, then we shall invite the electorate of this country to arm us with the authority to use the most effective means for removing this senseless obstruction from the path of progress."

In November the Lords threw out the Government's Licensing Bill. They had earlier thrown out its latest Education Bill, despite the fact that Lloyd George had by skilful negotiation secured a substantial measure of agreement with the Archbishop of Canterbury about its terms. Their cup, he decided, was full. He had settled his strategical plan of attack on them and won Asquith's approval of it. When the Old Age Pensions Bill was before the Lords, Lansdowne had dissuaded them from throwing it out on the ground that, though not strictly a money Bill, it was essentially a Bill of a financial complexion and was linked with provisions in the Budget allotting funds for it. Finance, he admitted, was by constitutional principle the exclusive concern of the Commons, with which the Lords should not meddle. Very well: Lloyd George planned to link further measures of Social Reform with Finance—measures which would be acutely disliked by the Peers—and if the Upper Chamber grew exasperated enough to throw them out, it and not the Liberal Government would be violating the Constitution and making a change in the powers of the Lords inevitable!

Accordingly he proceeded to frame his Budget for 1909 with the threefold purpose of raising the extra funds needed for old age pensions and other intended reforms; of making provision for those reforms in the Finance Bill; and of adopting tax-raising devices which would be particularly distasteful to the Peers and might rouse them to throw out the Budget.

This 1909 Budget was destined to make history, so its main features must be briefly sketched.

There were, to begin with, increases in some familiar items of taxation. Income Tax went up from 1s. to 1s. 2d. Death Duties on estates of more than £5,000 were raised by about one-third, mounting on estates of over a million pounds to 15%. Public-house licences were increased in price and placed on a new basis of valuation. Duties on spirits and tobacco rose.

Two important new features were attached to Income Tax. Earned incomes were, for the first time, charged at a lower rate than unearned; and a rebate of £10 was allowed in respect of each child under sixteen years of age to those with modest incomes. But an even more important innovation, destined to have drastic social effects, was the introduction

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of a Super-tax of 6*d.* in the £ on all incomes exceeding £5,000. It was the thin end of what has since proved to be a very broad wedge!

The really startling feature of the Budget, however, was the levy of four new Land Taxes. These were a tax of ½*d.* in the £ on the capital value of undeveloped land; a tax of 20% on the increment value obtained by the sale of land, where such increase was due, not to the owner's expenditure and enterprise, but to that of neighbours or the community as a whole; a 10% Reversion Duty on the enhanced value of property reverting to a lessor on the falling-in of a lease; and a Mineral Rights Duty of 1*s.* in the £ on mineral royalties and wayleaves.

The Budget further provided for the setting-up of three important Funds: the Miners' Welfare Fund, furnished by the Mineral Rights Duty, to improve conditions in the mines, provide pit-head baths and other amenities; the Development Fund, to stimulate agricultural improvements, forestry, rural industries, land reclamation and fisheries; and the Road Fund, to be provided out of the new taxation of motor-cars and petrol. By now, motors were becoming very numerous, and under the strain of this novel traffic the roads were collapsing into channels of thick dust or deep mud. Lloyd George has the credit of being the statesman who grappled successfully with this problem and was responsible for giving Britain its improved road system, with efficient surfacing, road widening, trunk routes and bypasses. His Development and Road Improvement Funds Act, which was passed later in the year, laid the foundations of modern agricultural progress and road transport.

L.G. was wont to speak of his difficulty in carrying his revolutionary taxes through the Cabinet. He said by far the most difficult fight he had was in the Cabinet, not in the country. Harcourt was the most inveterate in obstructing his proposals, while posing all the time as an ardent Radical. Crewe, while not liking them, said very little. Grey said nothing. But at heart they were all against him. Sir Robert Chalmers, then the head of the Treasury, walked up to the door of the Cabinet room with L.G. one day when he was going to a meeting to discuss his Budget proposals, and when L.G. had gone in Chalmers turned to the man at his side and said, "That little man goes in to the fight absolutely alone." When L.G. came out, Chalmers said to him apprehensively, "Well? . . ." "Oh, I carried them all right," was L.G.'s cheerful reply.

Asquith alone was helpful when it came to a vote, although he never supported the proposals actively. Once, when nearly everyone around the table had raised objections to a certain proposal, Asquith summed up with the words, "Well, I think there is substantial agreement on this point."

At that time no minutes of Cabinet meetings were taken, no votes recorded. It was left to the Prime Minister to record the sense of the

decisions taken, which he did after the Cabinet meeting in a letter to the King in his own handwriting. It was stated that at the end of Asquith's Ministry in 1916, after a debate on Air Defences, there were three different versions of the decisions taken, given by Ministers who each thought they had carried a different point.

Lloyd George opened this formidable Budget on 29th April, in a speech which lasted four and a half hours and was interrupted for a half-hour break while the Chancellor and his audience took rest and refreshment—in his case, coffee. Much of his speech dealt with the projected schemes of social legislation, the National Health and Unemployment Insurance, rural development, road maintenance and improvement, for which his Budget would provide. He was also designedly somewhat provocative in the stress he laid on his purpose of mulcting wealthy landowners to furnish benefits for the needy. It must be remembered that in those days landownership was not only the indispensable title to social eminence, but was still the source of most of the biggest individual fortunes. It had not yet been turned by the recurring incidence of heavy death duties into something approaching a family liability. Even this 1909 Budget, with its parade of placing the heaviest burdens on the broadest backs, set the maximum Death Duty on millionaire estates at no more than 15%. But Lloyd George had absorbed in his village childhood the tradition that the landlord was the wealthy tyrant, and in his young manhood his experience of the leasehold terms imposed on Welsh quarrymen, and his conflicts in local courts with landowning J.P.s on behalf of poachers, had reinforced that conviction. Whether justified or not, his hostility to landlords was completely sincere.

His formidable fighting speech succeeded both in rousing the Radical Wing of the Liberal Party and their Labour allies to delighted enthusiasm, and in stirring the Opposition to tempestuous anger. They saw in the Land Taxes, which were to be accompanied by a valuation of all land throughout the country, not only an immediate threat to property, but a menace of some ultimate measure of land nationalization. They prepared themselves to fight the Budget proposals to the last ditch.

Nothing could suit Lloyd George's book better; and in the months that followed—for the Finance Bill only secured its Third Reading on 4th November—he carried on a long parliamentary fight for his scheme. After the Budget fight had started, L.G. was playing golf one day in the early summer with Sir William Clark, and they passed a field of young corn. L.G. pointed to it, and said to Clark: "Do you see that corn? It will have ripened, it will be harvested, will be thrashed and made into bread, and the bread will have been consumed before this Budget is through." His prophecy proved correct. Most of the Budget provisions were quickly cleared through the House, but the land taxation clauses were fought

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tooth and nail through long nightly sittings. Here the Chancellor found that his most dangerous foes were those of his own household, for the Whig Wing of his party, many of whom were considerable landowners, disliked the taxes as much as the Tories, and upwards of a score of them repeatedly sought the Opposition lobby. This alarmed the Cabinet, and in the interests of party unity Lloyd George was compelled to give way to the extent of making various concessions about the valuation of land for Undeveloped Land Duty and Increment Duty, which made those taxes so unfruitful that a decade later he himself agreed to their abolition.

The conflict stirred the country. A Budget League was formed to carry on propaganda for the Bill, and after some struggle with his family instincts—for he was the grandson of a land-owning Duke—Winston Churchill, the close personal and political friend of Lloyd George, became its President. High Tory circles never forgave him for what they held to be treachery to his order, and their vendetta pursued him for another thirty years. The League was highly successful, and town and village took up its battle hymn, the "Land Song", set to the tune of "Marching Through Georgia":

The Land! the Land! 'Twas God made the Land;  
The Land! the Land! The ground on which we stand.  
Why should we be beggars with the ballot in our hand?  
God gave the Land for the People!

As the summer wore on, however, both sides of the House showed signs of wearying of the fight. The Cabinet was growing faint-hearted in view of the Whig opposition within the Liberal Party, while on the Tory side highly responsible voices were being raised to warn against the breach of the Constitution that would be made if the Lords threw out the Finance Bill. Lloyd George decided that stronger measures were called for to liven up the battle. So on 30th July he went to a Budget League meeting at Limehouse, and addressed a vast popular audience on his Budget aims.

The Limehouse speech was a history-making event, though anyone reading it now in the vastly changed social atmosphere of the modern world might well marvel at the stir it roused. L.G. began with a reference to the additional Dreadnought battleships provided for in the Budget. The City, he remarked, had clamoured for these Dreadnoughts, but now objected to footing the bill by the new taxes. They professed that their objection was to the other beneficent objects for which he was also providing, and he defended in reply the programme of Old Age Pensions, insurance against sickness and unemployment, and land development.

Passing to defend the Land Taxes, he gave examples of the way in which formerly valueless land had been turned into goldmines through

growth of population or the initiative and enterprise of public bodies or mining companies, which had then been forced to pay immense sums to landowners who had done nothing to earn it. He dealt caustically with ground landlords and the fat profits they made from renewals of leaseholds of sites which their lessees had made valuable. The facts given in his speech were characteristically unchallengeable. The comments, envenomed with the stinging humour of which he was a master, were justifiable in substance, though the ridicule he poured on ducal landowners was far from polite. It must be added that much more violent abuse, unrelieved by humour, was being daily poured upon him and his colleagues by eminent Tories.

The speech made an immense sensation. It did more; it wrote "Finis" to an epoch in English history. The tradition that the gentry were people who owned land and never soiled their hands with work or trade, and that such superior folk were the proper and unchallengeable masters of the nation, claiming as a natural right the humble respect of all not so distinguished: this tradition, inherited from the eighteenth century, had been cracking and crumbling during the past decade, but its façade was still tremulously erect. Now a Minister of the Crown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, standing next to the Premier as ruler of the nation, mercilessly and contemptuously exposed the way in which these exalted beings were exploiting the nation and reaping without toil the wealth earned by others. Humpty Dumpty fell to the ground at Limehouse, and nothing could put him up again.

The outstanding importance of the speech was quickly felt. Lord Northcliffe came to Lloyd George hot-foot to ask why he had not been forewarned that so climacteric an utterance was projected. This was the first time the two had met. In the years ahead they were destined to become very closely acquainted, first in friendship, ultimately in hostility.

The Limehouse speech, rending to tatters the landlords' case against the Land Taxes, had an instantly heartening effect on Liberal opinion in the House and the country. *The Times* of 4th August came out with an assertion that the political situation had undergone a change, that the fate of the Budget had ceased to be precarious, that there was in fact "a turn of the tide"; while the *Daily Mail* declared next day that agitation against the Budget had fallen flat outside the City, and that "unless the Unionist leaders can devise a new and more effective plan of campaign the defeat of the Budget will soon be past praying for".

But the wrath of the traditional ruling classes at the indecent exposure to which they had been subject at Limehouse rose to white heat. They instinctively realized that the prestige of their order had suffered a deadly blow, and they resolved to fight this contumacious Welsh demagogue, even up to the foot of the throne. That was no mere figure of speech,

## THE PEOPLE'S BUDGET

Such indignation was expressed in the uppermost circle of Society that King Edward felt compelled to send for Asquith and ask him if he could not restrain Lloyd George. "You had better talk to him yourself," suggested Asquith, who would never himself have made the Limehouse speech, but was delighted with the effect it had wrought on the morale of his followers.

On hearing from Asquith of this interview, Lloyd George at once wrote to the King:

"Treasury Chambers,  
"Whitehall, S.W.  
"5.8.09.

"The Chancellor of the Exchequer with his humble duty to Your Majesty has the honour to say that he understands from the Prime Minister with great regret that Your Majesty looks with disapproval on the speech which he delivered on Friday last at Limehouse. The Chancellor of the Exchequer would be grateful if he might be permitted to lay some considerations on the subject before Your Majesty.

"It is no doubt within Your Majesty's recollection that when the Chancellor of the Exchequer laid his financial proposals before Your Majesty prior to the introduction of the Budget, Your Majesty was good enough to listen with consideration, and even on some points with sympathy, to his statement. Since then the country has had full time to consider its proposals, and according to the testimony of *The Times* and other Opposition papers this week, the tide is running in their favour.

"The Chancellor of the Exchequer, however, has found himself subjected in connection with these same proposals to a storm of hostile criticism, the virulence of which, he ventures to think, is without parallel in the history of financial legislation in this country. Many and substantial concessions have been granted in order to remove such inequalities and hardships as have been shown to be likely to arise, and the Chancellor thinks he may fairly say that throughout the protracted discussions in the House of Commons he is admitted to have shown a constant moderation and willingness to meet his opponents. But in spite of this attitude on his part, the violence of the attacks to which he has been and is being exposed has been in no way mitigated, and he ventures to submit to Your Majesty that in his recent speech, the first public speech which he has made since the introduction of the Budget, he was justified in retorting upon his opponents in language which fell much short of much that has been said and repeated on the other side.

"The Chancellor trusts that Your Majesty will excuse the length of this communication. If he might at any future date be honoured with another audience with Your Majesty, he would greatly value the opportunity for a fuller statement of his position, and for learning direct from Your Majesty what are Your Majesty's views.

"D. LLOYD GEORGE."

King Edward wrote with his own hand the following answer:

"H.M. Yacht *Victoria & Albert*.

"The King thanks the Chancellor of the Exchequer for his letter of the 5th Instant, and for the explanation which he has given him respecting his recent speech on the Budget at Limehouse.

"As regards the Budget itself, the King expresses no opinion, but he was very glad to see the Chancellor of the Exchequer on two occasions concerning it and to have had some interesting conversations with him on various details connected with the Bill.

"The points on which he spoke to the Prime Minister on Monday last, were those concerning the language used by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, which the King thinks was calculated to set class against class and to inflame the passions of the working and lower orders against people who happen to be owners of property.

"The King readily admits that the Chancellor of the Exchequer has been attacked by some Members of the Opposition with much violence, and he regrets it, but he must remind him that though these gentlemen may have passed the fair limits of attack, they are private members and do not hold a high office in the Government as is the case with Mr. Lloyd George.

"If therefore the Chancellor of the Exchequer had been a private member, it certainly would not have been within the King's province to offer any official criticism on his speech; but it is owing to the fact that he holds one of the most important offices under the Crown and is an influential member of the Cabinet, which made him feel it his duty, with much regret, to remonstrate with the Prime Minister against the tone of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's speech, and to express to him his fear that Mr. Lloyd George was departing from the best traditions of his high office, traditions that had always been invariably observed by his distinguished predecessors.

"The King, in conclusion, must give the Chancellor of the Exchequer every credit for the patience and perfect temper which he has shown, under considerable provocation, during the Debates on the Budget.

"EDWARD R. & I.

"Cowes, 7th August, 1909."

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Having administered this firm and dignified reprimand, the King sent for Lloyd George to talk the matter over. "I am an old man," he said, "and I am giving you advice. My friends will be very hard hit by this Land Tax. Why not tax sugar instead?"

"The Liberals have given the nation a pledge not to increase the tax on sugar," answered L.G.

"Well, what about tea?" asked His Majesty. Lloyd George explained that old people depended on tea as their beverage. "Yes, yes," said Edward understandingly, "that is so. We will not tax their tea!" So Lloyd George left after promising to bear in mind what the King had put to him. But thinking it over did not lead him to any change of attitude. On the contrary he was secretly exultant at having exasperated the Peers to a degree which made their rejection of the Budget, in defiance of the Constitution, a strong probability. As the time drew near for the Finance Bill to go up to the Lords he deliberately heated the furnace of their indignation by going up to Newcastle-on-Tyne on 9th October and delivering three speeches there in support of the Budget, in which he again let himself go merrily, jeering at the Dukes and exalting his programme of social reform. One speech concluded as follows:

"Who ordained that a few should have the land of Britain as a perquisite? Who made ten thousand people owners of the soil and the rest of us trespassers in the land of our birth? Who is responsible for the scheme of things whereby one man is engaged through life in grinding labour to win a bare and precarious subsistence for himself, and when at the end of his days he claims at the hand of the community he served a poor pension of 8d. a day he can only get it through a revolution, and another man who does not toil receives every hour of the day, every hour of the night, whilst he slumbers, more than his poor neighbour receives in a whole year of toil? Where did the table of the law come from? Whose finger inscribed it? These are the questions that will be asked. The answers are charged with peril for the order of things the Peers represent, but they are fraught with rare and refreshing fruit for the parched lips of the multitude who have been treading the dusty road along which the people have marched through the dark ages and are now emerging into the light."

By this time Lloyd George had become the bogey-man of his opponents, who poured out on him from Press and platform a vulgarian flood of abuse for which they ransacked their vocabulary. He was a liar, a thief, a mountebank, a Communist, an Anarchist, a blatant blusterer, a dangerous demagogue, a fomentor of revolution, a Pecksniff and a Perkin

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

Warbeck, a bravo, a traitor, a devil's advocate, a Socialist wolf in Liberal clothing, and a Welsh poacher. "I should like," announced the Duke of Beaufort, "to see Winston Churchill and Lloyd George in the middle of twenty couple of dog hounds!" Children in the nurseries of Mayfair and Belgravia were hushed to sleep with the warning, "If you aren't good, Lloyd George will get you!" If he had faced contumely during the Boer War, Lloyd George was now the object of a reviling far more savage and bitter, because rooted in fear.

At least he achieved his purpose of whipping up the antagonism of the Peers to such heights that they threw out the Finance Bill after six days of heated debate. It was, as they had been solemnly warned by *The Times*, a gravely unconstitutional step, and one which threatened to plunge the nation into chaos by leaving the Government without authority to levy taxation to meet the country's expenditure. In retrospect, the really grotesque feature of the affair was that they were stampeded into this desperate course by the Land Taxes—taxes which even on paper were very modest and in practice proved ineffectual—while complete indifference was expressed by Balfour, the Tory Party leader, to the Super-tax, which in years to come was destined to develop into the most oppressive incubus that ever crushed down on a rich man's chest!

The Lords' rejection of the Budget compelled the Government to dissolve Parliament and appeal to the country. There was an orgy of speech-making by the statesmen on both sides—a campaign in which, as might be expected, Lloyd George took a foremost part. Some of his witticisms at the expense of the Dukes overstepped the bounds of good taste. His contemptuous reference to "the first of the litter" when speaking of their selection by primogeniture was an adhesive jape.

The Liberals demanded a mandate from the country to curb the power of the House of Lords, and authority to carry the "People's Budget" and go ahead with their programme of social reform and their delayed policies of Welsh Disestablishment and Irish Home Rule. The Tories were on a bad wicket in regard to the constitutional issue, but they denounced the Liberal programme as Socialism and offered their alternative of protective tariffs as an easy road to work and wealth for all. They also made play with the menace of the German navy and warned people not to trust the Liberals with their pacifist tendencies, which made them unreliable guardians of the nation's defence forces.

The Government had of course to face the habitual pendulum-swing of British political opinion, which after four years of Liberal rule tended to carry the floating vote to the other side. Their proposal to revise the Constitution, however good the reason, was hardly a high-scoring argument with John Bull, who is distrustful of major changes. So the

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General Election, fought in January 1910, produced a tense, evenly matched contest. There was great popular excitement, and crowds thronged Trafalgar Square and other public places for night after night during the fifteen days over which the election was spread, frantically cheering or groaning as the latest results were thrown on huge screens by magic lanterns. In the end the Liberal and Unionist Parties were almost exactly even—275 against 273—and the Government's majority was provided by the 40 Labour members and the 82 Irish Nationalists.

However made up, the majority of 124 was ample to warrant the claim that the Government had been given its mandate to carry the People's Budget and settle the constitutional issue with the House of Lords; though to ensure the trustworthiness of this majority there had to be some hard bargaining with the Irish Home Rulers. Lloyd George here proved again his skill in negotiation, carrying out the consultations with Redmond and O'Brien. Redmond pledged the support of the Nationalists for both the Budget and the Parliament Bill, realizing that the latter was a vital preliminary to the passage of a Home Rule Bill. O'Brien's Independent Nationalists were less amenable, but they formed only a small group.

In April the Parliament Bill was introduced, after a series of resolutions affirming its main principles had been carried; and the 1909 Finance Bill was again submitted to Parliament. It quickly passed through the Lower House and went up to the Lords, who, having already scorched their fingers once on it, now gingerly rolled it through with the utmost speed and hurried off to dinner. On 29th April, exactly a year from the day when Lloyd George had risen to introduce the Budget which was to bring about a social and constitutional revolution, the measure received the Royal Assent.

## CHAPTER XI

### NATIONAL INSURANCE

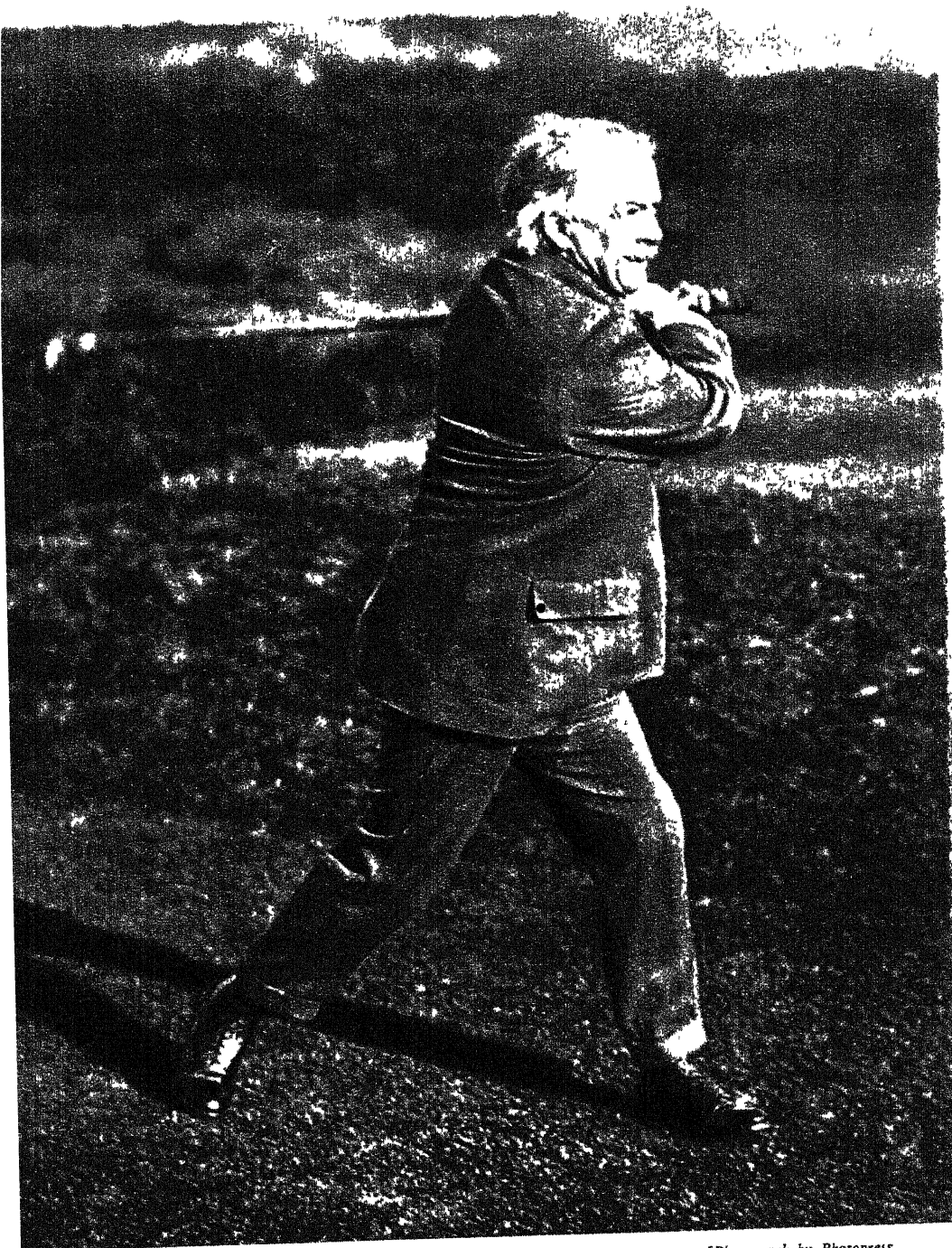
THE passing of his "People's Budget" was only the first round in the fight with the House of Lords which Lloyd George had so successfully staged. The veto powers of the Upper Chamber had still to be pruned by means of the Parliament Bill to enable the Liberals in future to carry their legislative programme, including Welsh Disestablishment—to which Lloyd George had all his life been pledged—and Irish Home Rule, which was not only Gladstonian policy, but the agreed price for Nationalist support in the Budget fight.

The Parliament Bill, as a supreme constitutional issue, was the special responsibility of the Prime Minister, and in the long-drawn-out struggle over it Lloyd George figures only as Asquith's lieutenant. It had the benefit of his powerful eloquence in the House and the country, but his role was secondary. The Bill was Asquith's charge and achievement.

The Prime Minister tried to get an assurance in advance from King Edward that if the Lords threw out the Bill he would exercise the Royal Prerogative to secure its passing by creating additional Liberal Peers. Such an undertaking, given by William IV to Lord Grey, had availed to secure the passing of the first Reform Bill in 1832. But Edward, who was elderly and in poor health, would not be hustled. The issue was still undecided when he fell ill. He died on 6th May, 1910, and was succeeded by his son, George V. The leaders of both parties felt—for politicians in those days had habits and instincts of consideration and courtliness, despite the language they used about one another—that it would be unfair to the new monarch to face him at the very moment of his accession with a grave constitutional crisis, so they agreed to a temporary truce.

The interval was used to examine the problem and see whether the two parties could reach agreement on a solution. The leaders of both sides met in a "Conference of Eight", which studied the question of the Lords' veto and its limitation, with reference to Finance, Irish Home Rule and other issues which might arise. The discussions of this "Conciliation Conference" were continued on into the autumn.

Lloyd George was of course a very active member of this Conference, in which he brought to bear all his powers of negotiation. The possibilities of agreement which he unearthed in the course of these discussions inspired him with a bold and startling idea—the idea of settling the controversy by setting up a Coalition Government which would carry



*[Photograph by Photopress]*

On the Golf Course



[Reproduced by permission of the proprietors of "Punch"]

The Glorious Fifteenth: cartoon by L. Raven Hill

through a agreed legislation including the main features of the programmes of both parties!

The programme would have of course to contain the items dearest to him: Welsh Disestablishment; National Insurance; Educational Reform, including the raising of the school-leaving age; and, inevitably, some solution of the Irish question, perhaps on federal lines such as Joseph Chamberlain had once advocated. But it is interesting to note that in return he was ready to agree to the introduction of a system of national military training, preferably on lines similar to the Swiss system, and proposed that the question of protective tariffs should be submitted to impartial investigation by expert economists and business men.

In a lengthy Memorandum which he dictated at Criccieth on 17th August, 1910, he set out his reasons for proposing a Coalition, and the objects which it could be used to achieve. This Memorandum is a most revealing document. It shows how lightly he held by party ties, and how active and wide-ranging was his eagerness to prepare and carry through big schemes of national reconstruction. As such, it deserves some extensive notice.

It opens with an explanation of the need for coalition in order to carry through urgent measures of reconstruction in face of the growing competition of other nations. Such reforms should be framed by agreement of the best intelligence in all parties, not crabbed and twisted in the strife of contending factions. The programme was one which neither side could hope to carry through single-handed without having to face a bitter and factious opposition if the issues were fought on party lines. Some members of whatever party was in opposition would appeal to the prejudices of the ill-informed in their efforts to oust the Government, for beneficial schemes were often unpopular at the outset, and if parties were fairly evenly balanced the deciding voice might be that of the least responsible and most selfish among the electorate. Further, the historic parties had developed contrasting ways of approaching problems, and the way of the party in power might not be the best for a particular issue; and neither side had an unlimited stock of first-class men to fill the Government offices. Yet, when it was a matter of major schemes of national reconstruction, the country should be served by the best men it could command, irrespective of party.

In the programme which he suggested this Coalition should tackle, Social Reform was given the first place. Under this head Lloyd George instanced Housing, Temperance, Social Insurance against sickness, unemployment, widowhood; and reform of the Poor Law.

Next came National Reorganization. Here he mentioned Education, including a settlement of the denominational controversy, the raising of the school age and the development of technical education. National

Defence required compulsory training, perhaps on the lines of the Swiss militia system; but he pointed out that no party government would dare to bring it in without agreement with the other side. Local Government needed overhaul, and the creation of adequate regional bodies might relieve some of the pressure on the Imperial Parliament in respect of local affairs. Trade problems could be impartially examined, including the tariff issue and the possibility of nationalizing the railways and using them to facilitate foreign trade. Finally there was the question of Land Reform and agricultural revival. He doubted the exclusive value of a policy of reviving smallholdings—then the only policy for rural restoration attracting wide support. Competent farmers were not too plentiful and they should be put in charge of large farms, rather than have the land distributed entirely among a vast number of dubiously efficient smallholders.

The Memorandum concluded with a short reference to the Imperial problems confronting the nation, and the advantages to be gained by an all-party approach to them. The vexed Irish question was instanced as one which could best be treated on such lines.

A Supplementary Memorandum set out in sixteen short paragraphs the concrete proposals which Lloyd George wanted the Coalition to agree to carry through jointly. This document went into rather fuller detail than the General Memorandum in describing just what should be done. As regards Tariffs, no action must be taken until a full and impartial inquiry into the working of British and foreign fiscal systems had been made, but a Preference could be given forthwith to the Colonies wherever practicable on existing duties, such as those on wine. Welsh Disestablishment might be enacted on more liberal lines than those hitherto proposed—more like those of the Irish Disestablishment Act of 1869. A national scheme for Insurance against unemployment, sickness and invalidity, including provision for widows and orphans based on contributions from both employers and workmen, supplemented by a State subsidy, was to be passed in the following year. Working-class housing was to be investigated and drastically improved, local authorities being given stronger powers for compulsory acquisition of land. The Poor Law was to be remodelled.

The restoration of the countryside, always a passion with Lloyd George, was proposed in paragraph 11 in the following terms:

“Agriculture and the rural industries of the country to be effectively assisted, by means of Credit Banks, Grants towards Agricultural and Technical Instruction in the villages, improved facilities for transporting and marketing Agricultural produce, and by scientific experiments for informing and instructing agriculturists.

"In this connection, the question of a further extension of the principles either of State purchase or of State-aid to purchasers to be impartially enquired into, with a view to ascertaining which of the two systems is the more likely to produce beneficial results, having regard to the economic conditions of the United Kingdom. Also, reclamation, cultivation and afforestation of Waste Lands to be encouraged and assisted."

Those who are familiar with the keen enthusiasm which Lloyd George in his later years displayed so tirelessly for rural revival will be interested to note how well-defined his programme already was in 1910.

The concluding paragraphs of this Summary of Proposals dealt with Education, Public Expenditure, Rating Reform, Trade Union Powers, Payment of Members and reduction of excessive Public-houses. It is worth noting that of the formidable list of proposed reforms set out in the Memorandum, nearly all were actually brought into effect, wholly or in large measure, during the next dozen years, while L.G. was holding office as a Minister of the Crown.

With Asquith's benevolent if somewhat sceptical approval, Lloyd George proceeded to start secret talks with Balfour, the Conservative leader, on the lines of this Memorandum. He found Balfour very willing to seek some agreement of the kind. Balfour, with his detached, philosophic attitude to politics, would naturally appreciate the very balanced and openminded quality of L.G.'s scheme, its freedom from party bias and its readiness to adopt some sensible compromise solution for the major issues that divided the parties.

Although at first very few people on either side knew of these talks, their effect began to show itself in the much less pugnacious tone of some Tory journals and speeches. On 5th October, 1910, Balfour went so far as to deliver an address at Edinburgh which provoked the sharp criticism of the extreme Right-Wing *Morning Post* for its failure to give a clear Conservative lead—it was in fact a tentative sounding of party opinion on several points in the policy of Lloyd George's Memorandum. Winston Churchill, who as L.G.'s intimate friend was aware of the discussions, wrote next day to the Chancellor from the Highlands, where he was, to use his own phrase, spending his days walking after horned beasts, and declared that he regarded Balfour's utterance as very significant. "On land, too, he marches in step with you," he wrote. "If we stood together we ought to be strong enough to impart a progressive character and policy, or by withdrawal terminate an administration which had failed in its purpose. Let us dine on Tuesday and talk to Grey about it all."

The reference to Sir Edward Grey underlines the fact that up to this point most of the Cabinet were in complete ignorance of Lloyd George's

secret negotiations with Balfour. They were aware only of the progress of the Conciliation Conference. This was making very heavy weather on the Home Rule issue. Herbert Samuel wrote to Lloyd George that, rather than abandon the Conference on this account, "it would, perhaps, not be an unreasonable compromise to give an undertaking not to make these arrangements apply to Home Rule in the *present Parliament*". He thought the Irish might be induced to agree to this, as there would have to be another election anyhow if the Conference failed. On 14th October the Conference reached a deadlock, the conditions demanded by the Tories being thus commented on by a letter of that date from Winston Churchill to Lloyd George:

"The condition that the new machinery is only to work after another General Election means a fresh appeal to the people anyhow on a disagreed Home Rule Scheme and makes it necessary for us to have 3 General Elections running in order to carry it. To say that even after the next election has been won on H.R. by a majority big enough for a joint session, there is yet to be another election—the Fourth—won running by Liberals cannot conceivably be maintained by any people who wish to act fairly."

On the same date Asquith circulated to the Members of the Conciliation Conference a Minute quoting the following extract from a letter received that evening from King George:

"I am much concerned by what you tell me has happened at today's meeting of the Conference. I quite recognize that the point of divergence which has now been reached is a most critical one. But I am comforted, to a certain extent, by your saying that you still hope a way out of the difficulties may be found. I know how you are all animated by an earnest wish to arrive at a settlement, and I trust that the adjournment for a fortnight may conduce to that end. . . . I trust in the meantime that nothing may leak out."

Lloyd George took advantage of the fortnight's breathing space to sound the Earl of Crewe, the highly respected leader of the Liberal Party in the House of Lords, about his scheme for a Coalition, and sent him a copy of his Memorandum. In his covering letter he said:

"I ought to add that in my conversations with B. I assumed that, as a condition precedent to such an understanding, a compact on the Constitutional issue was essential.

"I also gave it as my opinion that an agreement as to the lines of

## NATIONAL INSURANCE

settlement of the Education and Welsh Church questions was a necessary preliminary to any Coalition.

"He raised difficulties about Home Rule; but he was quite willing to consider any proposals for a federal arrangement."

Lord Crewe replied:

"I have read the Memo with keen interest and return it herewith. I shall be very glad to have an opportunity of talking it over with you: on Monday I come to London for a dinner to C. Hardinge, and had thought of leaving again at 4 on Tuesday: could we lunch together that day? Unluckily my house is dismantled, but perhaps you could give me lunch at No. 11, or we could lunch at a Club?

"I won't attempt to enter into any discussion of the proposals, but I may say this, that their attractiveness to me is founded on a conviction similar to that which I imagine has inspired the Memo; viz., that we have got pretty nearly to the end of our tether as regards great reforms on party lines. As you observe, they are bound to be unpopular in many quarters, and I don't see any signs of the driving force which is to carry them.

"Of course the difficulties are enormous and obvious—not least those in relation to the present position of the Conference—but there is no need to dwell on them at this moment."

Lloyd George gives his own account of these negotiations in his *War Memoirs*, and tells how he secured the approval, not only of Asquith, but also of Crewe, Grey, Haldane and Churchill in the Liberal Cabinet. On the Tory side Balfour similarly found a measure of support for the scheme from his leading colleagues, but, on going further down the ranks, discovered that some of his less enlightened supporters detested the idea of any arrangement that would involve them in an association with Lloyd George. They had just been ransacking their dictionaries for terms of abuse and contumely to heap upon him, and in their slow-moving minds they quite sincerely regarded him as a hateful and diabolic menace; worse even than that, a quite impossible person! On learning of their attitude, Lloyd George promptly offered to stand aside if his withdrawal would make possible the carrying of his programme by a Coalition. It was a supremely generous gesture, but it was in vain, for the bitter opposition of Lord Chilton—formerly Akers-Douglas, the Chief Tory Whip—when Balfour sounded him, finally shattered the whole plan.

The rejection of the proposed Coalition was promptly followed by the collapse of the Conciliation Conference. On 8th November the Prime Minister received a note from Balfour which said:

"I am afraid that under existing circumstances there is little use continuing our meetings. I had at one moment greatly hoped for better things.

"We must I suppose foregather again to discuss exactly what is to be said to the public."

So on 10th November the Conference met for a final assembly at which its failure was announced. Six days later the Parliament Bill, which had been in suspense since its passage through the Commons earlier in the year, was read a first time in the Upper Chamber. But when it came up again for Second Reading the Tory majority adjourned the debate in order to give precedence to a series of resolutions by their leader, Lord Lansdowne, proposing House of Lords reforms as an alternative to the Bill.

If the Peers' action was indiscreet, it was extremely natural. The Lansdowne House set—a group of leading Tory aristocrats, firmly established in the highest circle of the nation, at Court, in administrative posts, and in their great hereditary estates—regarded themselves as the real rulers of the State, whatever Government was in Office. They had a deciding voice in the policy of a Tory Government, and could amend or veto Liberal legislation. Doubtless the Upper Chamber was in need of reform. Many of its hereditary members never attended it. Some were admittedly unfit to have power over public affairs. Reform might clear these away and leave the real rulers with reinforced authority! They could not realize that their feudal status had become an anachronism.

The deadlock was complete, and Asquith had no option but to ask King George for an undertaking to use his prerogative if necessary, by the creation of additional Liberal Peers, to carry the Parliament Bill through the Upper Chamber if on a fresh appeal to the country the Liberals came back with a substantial majority in its favour. No doubt the prospect of debasing the "Fount of Honour" by such a proceeding was very repugnant to His Majesty, but with that unerring loyalty to the duties of a constitutional Monarch which always distinguished him, the King gave Asquith the required assurance, and Parliament was promptly dissolved on 28th November. The country faced a second General Election in the one year.

Lloyd George the peacemaker promptly reverted to his familiar role of party warrior, and flamed through the constituencies rekindling the fires of controversy. He poured out his oratory at Mile End, at St. Pancras, at Edinburgh, Cardiff, Llandrindod, Ipswich, Glasgow, Wrexham and East Ham, speaking two, three and four times a day to great gatherings. He ended with a whirlwind tour of his own constituency, where he was safely returned with a majority of 1,208—more by 130

than in the previous January. But there was a bill to pay for this exertion. His voice, impaired by a cold from which he was suffering during his campaign, gave way under the strain, and for the next four months he had to retire to the country and nurse his throat. He could console himself with the reflection that the General Election had returned the Liberal Government with practically the identical majority it obtained in the previous January—two more, in fact, as the result of an Irish Nationalist gain.

This success enabled Asquith to force the constitutional issue. The Parliament Bill was in due course again passed by the Commons and sent up to the Lords, who proceeded to cut it up with drastic amendments. Thereupon Asquith sent a letter to Balfour, warning him that he held the King's promise to exercise his Prerogative if necessary to ensure the passing of the Bill in substantially the form in which it left the Commons. Fury raged in the Upper Chamber at these tidings, though it cannot have been unexpected. The Tory Peers split into "Hedgers" and "Ditchers"—those willing on Balfour's advice to abstain from a division and let the Bill through, and those resolute to fight in the last ditch against the detested measure and damn the consequences. In the end, counsels of sanity won the day, and though not a single voice from the Tory benches admitted the right of the people's reaffirmed decision to be honoured, they were so aghast at the prospect of a flood of parvenu Liberal Peers that on 10th August the Parliament Bill, aided by a large number of Tory abstentions and the votes of 38 Tory Peers, secured a majority of 17 in the Upper Chamber. Therewith the control of finance was agreed to rest solely with the Commons, and a Bill passed three times in the Lower Chamber during the lifetime of a single Parliament could become law, despite its rejection by the Lords.

It was perhaps providential for Lloyd George that his throat trouble kept him out of the arena during the first four months of 1911. He needed the recuperation which this interval permitted, for the rest of the year was to be a very full one for him, crowded with distinguished achievement. Nor was he idle during his enforced vacation, for he spent the months in drafting and polishing his National Insurance Bill, and in holding consultations with the various interests it would affect.

He introduced this Bill on 4th May, 1911. It was a vast undertaking, for the whole system had to be built up from the ground. It was the biggest piece of original legislation for which Lloyd George was ever uniquely responsible. It included both Health and Unemployment Insurance, based on a system of compulsory contributions, and his intention was to expand it later by the addition of Widows', Orphans' and Old Age Pensions—an addition made 14 years later by a Tory Administration.

The Tories indeed gave the Bill at the outset as warm a welcome as the Government supporters. They passed its First and Second Readings without a division, and were loud in their praise of its author. Their views were summed up on the Sunday after its introduction by the *Observer* as follows:

"He has had an infinitely difficult and intricate task. He has brought to bear upon it exhaustive labour, practical aptitude of the highest kind, thorough moral courage, and with these a certain inimitable reasonableness and skill which are all his own. His exposition on Thursday, devoid of ornament, without a sentence or a syllable of partisanship, was that rarest and almost best thing in Parliamentary politics, a great speech and a quiet speech. Everyone who heard it saw in him a far bigger man when he sat down than he was thought to be, either by friends or by foes, when he rose."

This Conservative enthusiasm for the Bill was easy to understand. National Insurance might be dubbed Radicalism or Socialism or paternal Toryism, and it was in keeping with the traditions of Disraeli and Randolph Churchill. But whatever it was, it certainly was not Liberalism as Liberalism was preached by the Manchester School, with its reverence for *laissez-faire* and for the sanctity of free enterprise, untrammelled by State control or direction.

Lloyd George employed the interval between the Second Reading and the Committee stage of the Bill in trying to complete his consultations with the interests concerned. He won the Friendly Societies—serious potential enemies, on whose preserve of working-class insurance his scheme was poaching—by arranging to appoint them as "Approved Societies" to be agents for the carrying out of the plan. But he had not been equally successful with the doctors, and his failure to conciliate them in advance was a serious oversight, which at one stage menaced the whole scheme. A large number of doctors were implacably hostile to the medical proposals of the Bill, convinced that their practices would be ruined by the introduction of the panel system, and they organized a vigorous campaign of opposition. Lloyd George, however, ably assisted by Dr. (now Lord) Addison, countered with a canvass of doctors, as the result of which he ultimately enrolled enough of them willing to work the scheme to enable him to carry on, even if the rest decided to boycott it.

It had been easy to consult beforehand with the Friendly Societies, for they were a fairly compact and well-organized group. It had not been equally possible to consult with the doctors, as they were far more numerous, scattered and discrete. It was out of the question to secure an advance understanding about the scheme with the general public; and as

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the measure slowly moved through its Committee stage in the House, and its details came under criticism, a good deal of popular dislike of the proposed innovation began to show itself. Workers did not welcome the prospect of being compelled to contribute weekly, whether they wanted to or not. Employers did not relish the duty of keeping and stamping Insurance cards and paying their share of the stamps. Doctors were indignant at the notion that a part of their practice should come under State regulation and payment. Lloyd George's slogan, "Ninepence for Fourpence!" became blown upon by malicious opponents until it was treated as a rather bad joke.

Although the Tory Party officially approved the Bill in principle, some of the Tories were glad to give furtive encouragement to this antagonism. The most spectacular of the hostile movements was one directed against the inclusion of domestic servants in the Insurance Scheme. When it dawned on mistresses that they would have to stamp their servants' Insurance cards, many of them grew indignant. A popular paper published a cartoon showing a duchess furiously exclaiming, "What, me lick stamps?" The *Daily Mail* launched a violent propaganda campaign on this theme, alleging that inspectors would invade Society drawing-rooms to see if ladies had stamped their maids' cards, and claiming that servants on becoming entitled to sickness benefit would be liable to instant dismissal by mistresses! It organized a National Protest Committee, which set up a Servants' Tax Resisters' Defence League and took the Albert Hall for a great demonstration. Lloyd George invited the Protest Committee to come and discuss the Bill with him. They refused, and the refusal showed how disingenuous was their campaign. But on 28th November, the day before the Albert Hall meeting, he met a deputation of organizations representing women workers and had no difficulty in clearing away their misconceptions. The Albert Hall meeting was duly held, with Lady Desart in the chair and Hilaire Belloc as chief speaker. But it was a hollow demonstration, with little substance behind the sound.

The measure was slowly piloted through its Committee stage with infinite patience and conciliatory tact by its author. So complex a scheme inevitably offered innumerable openings for criticisms of detail and suggestions of alternative arrangements. Where he could do so without damaging its essential structure, Lloyd George accepted amendments or himself drafted new clauses to incorporate the proposals of his critics. The fact that so many alterations were made to the Bill in Committee formed, later on, the basis of a suggestion that it had been hastily and imperfectly drafted. This was less than just to the original Bill. Lloyd George was far too intent on getting his measure through to stand obstinately on matters of detail if an adroit concession would win it support.

The Tories were in a difficult position. They were furious with the Government over the Parliament Bill, and would dearly have liked to defeat it. The Insurance Bill was by no means popular with the man in the street, and the temptation to base an attack on it must have been considerable. But their leaders recognized it to be a really valuable essay in constructive social legislation. They could not oppose it in good faith, though they detested the party which had produced it and the man who had invented it. So in the end Bonar Law, who had succeeded Balfour in November 1911 as leader of the Conservative Party, declared that they would not say No to the Bill, because they approved its principles, and would not say Yes, because they didn't like the Bill itself. A Tory front-bencher, H. W. Forster, moved the rejection of the Third Reading, and when his motion was lost, all but a score of the Tories left the House and took no part in the final division on the Bill itself. The House of Lords, acting on Lord Lansdowne's advice, gave it a smooth passage. "Our attitude," said he, "is anything but one of uncompromising hostility to this Bill."

So, on 16th December, 1911, the National Insurance Bill received the Royal Assent. Lloyd George has deeply marked almost every aspect of the social, economic and industrial life of Britain by measures which he initiated or played an essential part in promoting; but the scheme of National Insurance of which he laid the foundation will stand as his greatest contribution to the nation's well-being. It was at first widely unpopular. Not until its Unemployment Insurance provisions saved the country from chaos at the end of the First World War did some of its critics begin to grow reconciled to it, though medical opposition waned much more quickly as the Insurance Panel proved itself the salvation of many a practice in working-class districts. But the foundations of the scheme proved themselves to have been rightly planned, and they were found adequate to bear the later superstructure of Widows', Orphans' and Contributory Old Age Pensions which Lloyd George had designed to add, and Baldwin's Government enacted in 1925. Those same foundations have been retained for the still more comprehensive scheme, inspired by the Beveridge Report, of a Universal State Health and Pensions Service.

National Insurance, however, if it was Lloyd George's *magnum opus* for 1911, was by no means his only notable achievement during the year. As Chancellor he had, of course, to frame the Budget and carry the Finance Bill. He was the Government's most effective spokesman on all important issues, and Asquith's lieutenant and valued consultant about administrative problems. He found time to follow international affairs and make a dramatic intervention during the summer to avert the danger of a European war; while he was equally effective as a conciliator at home in the settlement of a serious railway strike.

The 1911 Budget, which he introduced on 16th May, contained one important new feature—provision for the payment of Members of Parliament. He had advocated this from his first entry into politics because it would enable the most suitable men to devote themselves to a parliamentary career, irrespective of the extent of their private means. Without this provision, the House of Commons was open only to men of independent fortune or to those who were supported by some organization and had to act as its delegates rather than as representatives of their constituents.

"I do not think it desirable," he said, when speaking on the Budget resolution, "that any man should come here to represent any organization except his own constituency—I do not care whether it is a trade union organization or any other. A man ought to be here to represent the general interests of his constituents, and it is only the necessities of the case which drive a man as an expedient, as the only opening, to utilize the other method—to come here to fight for particular interests."

Although in the previous autumn the Tories had appeared ready to accept this proposal, and F. E. Smith (later Lord Birkenhead) had announced his "reluctant conversion" to it, they now voted solidly against it. But it was carried, and most of them soon reconciled themselves to drawing their £400 a year!

The summer saw Lloyd George playing a role in world affairs which was not only novel for him, but disconcerting to certain of his admirers. This was his intervention in the Agadir crisis.

Five years before, at Algeciras, the French had been accorded a zone of influence in Morocco. Using the pretext of some trouble in Fez, beyond their zone, they sent thither a military expedition. The German Government saw in this action an excuse for muscling in themselves on North-West Africa to get a bit more territory, and the German gun-boat *Panther* turned up at the port of Agadir in southern Morocco. On 1st July the German Ambassador, Metternich, told Sir Edward Grey in reply to his inquiry that the *Panther* had been sent to protect German subjects and "support German interests". But though Germany refused to be more explicit about her intentions, it was known that she was bringing strong pressure to bear on France.

Britain could not view this move with indifference. We had a legal interest, as we were parties to the Algeciras treaty; and a very strong practical interest because of the growing menace of German naval expansion. Agadir could be turned into a naval base which would menace all our sea routes to Africa and South America. On 3rd July Grey told

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the Cabinet what was happening, and informed Metternich that in view of our treaty obligations to France and our own interests in Morocco we could not recognize any new arrangement come to behind our backs.

The reference to the Cabinet marked the serious nature of the situation. At that time it was still the rule for only a very small number of senior statesmen to be consulted about foreign affairs, which were conducted in the greatest secrecy. But Lloyd George, remembering the eye-opener about German ambitions which he had received when visiting the Reich in 1908, became keenly interested in the Moroccan issue, and shared Grey's anxiety as weeks went by and no further response came from Berlin. When by 21st July Grey could still get no news out of Metternich, Lloyd George felt it was time to sound a warning. He was speaking that evening at a Mansion House dinner, so he drafted a short statement and got it approved by Asquith and Grey.

His speech opened appropriately enough with references to the nation's finances and the growth of our world trade. This led on to an emphasis on the importance to Britain of world peace and the desirability of settling disputes by peaceful diplomacy. Then he added:

"But I am also bound to say this—that I believe it is essential in the highest interests, not merely of this country but of the world, that Britain should at all hazards maintain her place and her prestige amongst the Great Powers. The potent influence of this country has been many a time in the past, and may yet be in the future, invaluable to the cause of human liberty. It has more than once in the past redeemed Continental nations, who are sometimes too apt to forget the service, from overwhelming disaster and even from national extinction. I would make great sacrifices to preserve peace. I conceive that nothing would justify a disturbance of international goodwill except questions of the greatest national moment; but if a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position that Britain has won by centuries of hazard and achievement—by allowing Britain to be treated where her interests were vitally affected as if she were of no account in the Cabinet of nations—then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great country like ours to endure!

"National honour is no party question. The security of our great international trade is no party question. The peace of the world is much more likely to be secured if all nations realize fairly what the conditions of peace must be!"

People came away from the Mansion House asking one another uneasily what it all meant. But the German Ambassador was under no

illusion as to the meaning, nor was the Kaiser when he got the report. He was furious, and Metternich received instructions to make a strong protest to Grey and demand Lloyd George's dismissal. He was bluntly told that the statement had the full support of His Majesty's Government.

The affair dragged uneasily on for another two months. Winston Churchill, who got full details about it from Lloyd George, turned eagerly to the making of warlike plans. He wrote to Grey on 30th August proposing a triple alliance with France and Russia to guarantee the independence of Belgium, Holland and Denmark, and stressing the importance of defending Antwerp and blockading the Rhine. He was worried, too, about the indifference of the Admiralty to the crisis, and reported with horror on 14th September that practically everyone there of importance was away on holiday.

There was an important sequel to this interest of Churchill in the Admiralty. McKenna was at that time First Lord—a loyal mouthpiece for his Admirals. But the serene, complacent obtuseness of the Admiralty which horrified Churchill alarmed Asquith, especially when Haldane, who had been reorganizing the War Office and planning an Expeditionary Force, found that the Admiralty had no plans for its transport. Haldane offered to transfer to the Admiralty and reorganize it too. L.G. urged Asquith to give the job to Churchill. His advice finally won the day, and in October the young statesman got the appointment, changing posts with McKenna.

It can be no exaggeration to claim that this appointment, for which Lloyd George was mainly responsible, saved Britain in the opening phases of the First World War. Neither McKenna nor Haldane would even have thought of the daring and unconventional measures that Churchill took at the end of July 1914 to hold the Navy in readiness and seize command of the seas the moment that war was declared. Thus the Agadir incident had two important after-effects. It roused the sleeping patriot in Lloyd George, to the alarm of his pacifist friends, and left him with a deepened awareness of the German menace. It roused the sleeping warrior in Churchill, and sent him to a post where his military genius could be used to serve his country.

The 1911 summer was an exceptionally hot one. Great heat is liable to produce frayed tempers and a disinclination to work, so the country experienced a crop of labour troubles that culminated in August in a widespread railway strike which threatened the people with industrial paralysis and famine. Churchill, who was still Home Secretary, promptly ordered out the military to guard the railways against bands of rioters and to protect those men who stayed at work and ran trains carrying essential supplies. Lloyd George as promptly stepped in with his inimitable skill in negotiation. He talked matters over with the Trade Union

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leaders and the employers, and succeeded in bringing both sides together on the second day of the strike for a joint consultation which ended in work being resumed while a Royal Commission was working out a prompt settlement. It was characteristic of the difference between L.G. and Churchill, the two greatest war leaders that Britain has known in modern times, that while Churchill's first instinct was to call out the military and crush the strike, L.G. as instinctively tried to bring both sides together and secure a fair settlement.

All through the year a growingly violent agitation was being carried on for Women's Suffrage. It was sustained by the sacrificial devotion of numbers of women who were ready to go to the most fanatical extremes for the cause. But some of those who directed it were bitter opponents of the Liberal Government, and used the Suffrage movement as a tool for their party ends. Thus Liberal candidates who were pledged to the hilt in favour of Women's Suffrage were opposed and shouted down, while Tories who were avowedly anti-suffragist were supported. Lloyd George himself, who was one of the strongest supporters of the Women's Vote, was the object of their bitterest attacks. On one occasion, when coming from a meeting where he had been pleading their cause, he was injured by a missile that nearly knocked his eye out. A speech which he made at Bath to an audience of 5,000 people in favour of votes for women was interrupted at every paragraph by suffragists who had to be ejected. Round the hall surged a great crowd, shrieking for Votes for Women, and a number of suffragettes kept up from the roof of a building near the hall a cataract of hostile eloquence through a megaphone; their ardour uncooled by a frosty night and a bitter north-east wind.

Much as he suffered at their hands, Lloyd George never ceased to support their cause. Asquith was stubbornly opposed to Women's Suffrage, but L.G. succeeded in persuading him to agree, if Parliament were willing, to its inclusion in the Bill for Manhood Suffrage which it was planned to introduce. "You cannot trust the interests of any class entirely to another class; and you cannot trust the interests of any sex entirely to another sex," asserted Lloyd George. Women realized the nation's social needs better than men, such as the necessity for housing reform and slum clearance. "Slums are often the punishment of the men; they are almost always the martyrdom of the women. Give her a voice. Give her the right to a share in the making and administering of the laws which affect not merely her own life, but what is dearer to her, the lives of her children!"

A few years later, in the midst of the most desperate stages of the First World War, Lloyd George would place Women's Suffrage on the Statute Book.

## CHAPTER XII

### LAND REFORM

THE years between the passing of the Parliament Act and the outbreak of the First World War were disfigured by extraordinary political bitterness. There was a spirit of unscrupulous savagery abroad, which found vent in vindictive efforts of the Opposition to defame the Government, in the violent tactics of the militant suffragists, in the armed defiance of the Ulster Unionists. Men were deplorably ready to use dishonest slander and calumny, lawlessness and violence to gain their ends.

This was due in part to the fact that the country was in the throes of a social revolution. Traditional fences were being broken down and old landmarks disappearing. The familiar sanctions of religion, of custom, of etiquette, caste and class were losing their authority. A leaven of new ideas which had been working in the nation for a decade past bubbled up in yeasty ferment. Orthodox theology had been hamstrung by the Darwinian theory of evolution. Rival schools of Socialism—almost as numerous as the people claiming to be Socialists—challenged the old political and economic creeds. The workers, organized in growingly powerful Trade Unions, were thrusting forward to demand a bigger voice alike in politics and in industry. The newly educated masses read enormously, buying cheap reprints of the best literature, and their mental awakening had some disconcerting results.

Into this restless society had been flung the various reform measures of the Liberal Government—measures with which the name of Lloyd George will always be associated. He had not of course originated them all. Many of them had been talked about for years in an idealistic fashion. But his urge to get ahead and do things, to carry out in practice what others were content to discuss in theory, was responsible in no small measure for the big body of beneficent legislation that filled the first six years of the Liberal administration. In part he was a symptom and expression of his age; in part he was also its catalyst and stimulating genius.

But if Lloyd George worked furiously to cast up the highways and rear the structures in which the children of the new age might live an ampler life, the measures he brought in and the lively and arresting oratory with which he advocated them were contributory causes of the troubled state of the nation. His People's Budget and the Parliament Act which sprang from it had finally shattered the old tradition, lingering on from

feudal times, of the political supremacy of the landed aristocracy. Until then it had still been assumed by themselves, and submissively accepted by the public, that the landowning peers had a natural right to rule the country; and though industry and commerce were now producing millionaires rivalling them in wealth, the feudal tradition clung. Estate ownership was the sole mark of gentility, and wealth derived from it conferred a social and political distinction which millions of money sullied with the stain of trade or industry could not supply. Now this ruling caste found its power broken, and fought back desperately. Many, no doubt, among its members honestly believed that their fall meant national ruin, and thought any means justified that would wreck the Liberal administration.

The defiance of law and order which was openly breathed by the highly placed when their privileges were menaced found its echo in humbler ranks. The fact was that the nation was growing weary of tranquillity. Through the milleniums of their history men have been fighting animals, and their pugnacious instincts are deep-rooted. But in Britain there had for generations been settled peace. All her recent wars had been fought at a distance and very few of her sons, comparatively, had taken part in them. So now, when strange tremors were shaking the social fabric and upsetting the old standards, people welcomed the thought of fighting about something, and the prospect of unfamiliar violence held an immoral attraction. The reckless outrages of the militant suffragettes, the riotous disturbances that marked labour disputes and the warlike preparations of the Ulster rebels no doubt owed much to this inner restlessness.

The Government, during these years, was busy using its new powers under the Parliament Act to carry three legislative proposals which had for long figured in its programme: Home Rule for Ireland; Disestablishment of the Welsh Church; and Electoral Reform, including the abolition of Plural Voting. All were highly contentious. Home Rule, indeed, was destined to provoke bitter civil strife. In addition, Lloyd George was insistently pressing on with his schemes of social amelioration, to which he planned to add—and it was no peace-bringing addition—a comprehensive measure of land reform.

Much of his energy during 1912 was, however, devoted to the task of getting his National Insurance Act safely launched. It was already on the Statute Book, but its system of contributions was not due to start until 15th July, 1912, and the payment of benefits and provision of medical attention only in the following January (apart from sanatorium treatment of tuberculosis, which was put in hand immediately). Thus for a year there was a tedious interlude of suspense which opponents of the Government utilized to conduct an unscrupulous campaign against the

Act, telling the public they would never get any benefits from it, that their Insurance contributions were being used up to pay the salaries of Members of Parliament, and that the whole scheme was a gigantic fraud.

The Tory leaders were not genuinely opposed to the Act—though Bonar Law, who was often indiscreet in his utterances, once rashly answered a challenger that he would repeal it if in power—but they saw that it was far from popular as yet with the nation, and would not be until it was actually working, so there was a temptation to heighten this temporary unpopularity as a means of discrediting the Government. Resolutions were moved in both the Commons and the Lords for postponing the Act's operations. A second Albert Hall meeting of the "Servants' Tax Resisters' Defence Association" was held on 27th June, to which, as Lloyd George put it, "domestic servants drove up in their luxurious motor-cars to protest against their mistresses paying threepence a week!" At this meeting, amid a flood of abuse of Lloyd George, the public were exhorted to defy the law and refuse to fill in their Insurance cards. Two days later Lloyd George uttered a strong warning against this Anarchist doctrine, this suggestion that people should only obey those laws which they liked. "Is rent going to be optional?" he asked, pointing out that one could not make the laws which benefited the rich compulsory, and those for the protection of the poor optional. "You cannot make lawlessness a monopoly of the well-to-do!"

More serious was the agitation against the Act carried on by the British Medical Association, whose President, Sir James Barr, declared that the Insurance scheme would encourage disease, increase sickness and hasten the degeneracy of a spoon-fed race, lower the standard of medical education and prevent intellectual young men from entering the medical profession. At its meetings in Liverpool on 22nd–24th July, the B.M.A. called on doctors who were members of Insurance Advisory Committees to resign from them and instructed all doctors to refuse to work the Act. It demanded that the capitation fee for panel patients should be 12s. The Plender Report on actual amounts received by doctors in contract practice put the figure at about 4s. 6d. Lloyd George was offering a fee which with extra payments for drugs and treatment of consumption would amount to 6s. 6d. On 23rd October he announced that he would raise this figure to 9s., and warned the profession that if this were not accepted he would have to consider organizing a State Medical Service.

Doctors are as a class neither greedy nor unscrupulous, so the persistent opposition of the B.M.A. must have been due to a gravely mistaken calculation as to the effect of the Insurance scheme on doctors' incomes, combined with violent party prejudice in some cases. However, when the Act came into full working in January 1913, Lloyd George was able to announce triumphantly that the panels everywhere had been

filled, except for some uncertainty in North London. It had been a long and anxious struggle to force the immense benefits of the scheme on an apathetic and unwilling public. The Liberals in Parliament were lukewarm about it and several in the Cabinet would have been glad to drop the whole affair when they saw by-elections going against them one after another. But Asquith backed his lieutenant unflinching and Lloyd George drove grimly on till this great social reform was set in operation—a reform the economic effects of which were destined to be far more revolutionary than its author perhaps envisaged.

The Welsh Disestablishment Bill, introduced in April 1912 by the Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna, promised the fulfilment of L.G.'s lifelong ambition. The case for Disestablishment had long been overwhelming. As the Royal Commission had ascertained, three-fourths of the active religious life of Wales was Nonconformist, and Welsh Nonconformity embodied all that was characteristic of its national sentiment, Anglicanism being an alien importation notoriously out of sympathy with Welsh patriotic ideals. Speaking in the House of Commons on the First Reading of the Bill, Lloyd George said:

“The predominance of Nonconformity is not merely numerical. It really fashions the whole character of religious services there. . . . The names that are revered as Fathers of the Church, and the men who built Wales as it is today, and made its religious, spiritual and intellectual life—all these great names are the names of Nonconformists. . . . Every religious revival that comes now and again to pick up the nation from the torpor into which we all sink comes from the Nonconformists. The great Sunday School organization in Wales is the greatest religious organization I know of for educational purposes in any country. . . . That great organization which has been brought to a state of perfection almost incredible is the work of Nonconformists. . . . We feel that in this case really it is England that denies justice, and is imposing upon us as the national exponent of our spiritual life not the Church of our choice, not the Church that has been the source of the spiritual life of the nation, not the Church which has been the means of rescuing us from our degradation, but their own Church, the Church that suits them and not us. . . .”

The national will in the matter was beyond dispute. For 30 years past the overwhelming majority of the Welsh members of Parliament—on one occasion the whole number—had been men pledged to demand Disestablishment. Had Disestablishment alone been at issue, it would probably have passed even the House of Lords with little opposition. It was the Disendowment clauses of the Bill which roused bitter feeling.

While the Anglican Church in Wales was, under the Bill, to be left in possession of all its real estate—the cathedrals, churches, parsonages, glebes, bishops' palaces—and of all endowments acquired since 1662, the ancient endowments and tithes which had pertained to the original National Church of Wales were to be resumed by the nation and devoted to charitable purposes and education.

The fight over this part of the Bill was waged desperately by the champions of Anglicanism. It was not without its humours, for among those champions the foremost were the Dukes and, in the Commons, the Cecils; and Lloyd George was not slow to point out that the family fortunes of these great Unionist houses—Cavendishes, Russells, Cecils, Mannors, Seymours and the rest—had been laid in the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI by the spoils of monastic estates, church lands, greater tithes and other church property. He castigated them for coming "with their hands dripping from the fat of sacrilege" to condemn him for directing back to the charitable and educational purposes, to which it had originally been dedicated, the ancient heritage of tithe and endowment of the original Welsh Church.

Some little time later, when Lloyd George was in Rome on a visit and called at the Vatican, he was amused to be told by a Cardinal how warmly the Pope had appreciated his description of the Cecils' hands "dripping from the fat of sacrilege". His Holiness naturally had little sympathy with the troubles of the heretical Anglican nobles whose wealth was derived from the despoiling of church estates and Catholic monasteries.

Welsh Disestablishment was not an issue about which English Liberals in general felt very strongly; but Lloyd George's sincere and magnificent oration in this First Reading debate won their backing for the measure. He had to come again and again to the rescue of the Bill in its subsequent stages, and towards the end of the crowded session the Cabinet seriously proposed dropping it, but at the close of the meeting McKenna and Lloyd George tackled Asquith and won his consent for it to go forward. It was rejected on Second Reading by the Lords, and had thereafter to be carried forward along the tedious but navigable route opened up by the Parliament Act. It was passed a second and a third time by the Commons in 1913 and 1914, thus overriding the Lords' veto—a pilgrimage on which it was accompanied by the Home Rule Bill. When at last it reached the Statute Book in September 1914 its operation was doomed to be held up for a further span of years by the First World War.

In the late summer of 1912 an event took place which gave practical expression to Lloyd George's affection for the village where he had spent his boyhood, and demonstrated his zeal for rural amenities. This was the opening at Llanystumdwy of a Village Institute. Some years before he

had brought a libel action against a traducer who had overstepped the very wide tolerance that L.G. accorded to his enemies. Even from the early days of his political career he was the object of abuse and slanderous whispers which could not easily be nailed down, and in the main he disregarded them. In this instance, however, he had taken the offender to court and gained damages of £1,000, which he set aside to provide an Institute for his beloved village. The project was not easy to carry out, for not a landlord in the district would sell him a yard of ground for a site. This did not increase his affection for landlords or lessen his zeal for land reform! At last his brother William succeeded in purchasing a croft of about three acres on the east side of the village, and the Institute was built. On 21st September, 1912, it was formally opened as a non-alcoholic, non-political and non-sectarian social and cultural centre for Llanystumdwy. After the gate had been unlocked by C. F. G. Masterman and the main door by Lloyd George's wife Margaret, there was a feast of speeches such as a Welsh audience loves, ending with one by the donor.

It was typical of Lloyd George's wide humanity that the only ascetic note lingering from his austere puritan upbringing was the ban on intoxicating liquor. There was none on cards or dancing, and in his speech—which, as usual in those days, was punctuated by suffragette interruptions—he urged the villagers to get up Welsh plays and operettas. The rector, a bitter political opponent, was made one of the trustees of the new Institute.

When the Welsh Disestablishment Bill had been safely launched, Lloyd George started to prepare for his Land Campaign, the next item in his programme of social reform. His passion for liberty, which in religious matters made him advocate the disestablishment of what as a Welshman he held to be an alien episcopal control, made him in secular matters eager to free the farm labourer and small farmer from the feudal tyranny which was still all too common in the countryside; while his experience as a country-town lawyer had familiarized him with the crippling effect of the leasehold system on the trader and on the artisan who sank his savings in building his home on a site owned by a ground landlord. Though he had studied the theories of Henry George, L.G. was never a "single-taxer": but he saw clearly the evil effects of land monopoly, and aimed at mitigating them by a series of measures of land reform; security of tenure for the tenant farmer; a decent minimum wage for the farm labourer, whose earnings at that time were about 14s. a week; better rural housing; rent courts; reclamation of waste lands; afforestation; and, in the towns, protection for leaseholders and a right in some circumstances to enfranchisement of their leaseholds, and the taxation and rating of land values.

He secured Asquith's agreement to this programme, and on 29th June,

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1912, at the close of a speech he was delivering to a crowd of 5,000 people at Woodford Green on the Insurance Act, he made his first definite reference to the projected campaign.

“Do you know what is in front of you? A bigger task than democracy has ever yet undertaken in this land! You have got to free the land, to free the land that is to this very hour shackled with the chains of feudalism. We have got to free the people from the anxieties, the worries, the terrors—terrors that they ought never to be called upon to face—terrors that their children may be crying for bread in this land of plenty. We have got to free the land from that. . . .”

As a statement of policy this was not very explicit, but it was both important and portentous: important because it showed that he conceived his land campaign to be the culmination of his programme of social reform and its most far-reaching section; portentous as an advance notice that measures of land reform were to figure in the Government's programme. The Press did not fail to mark the omen, and papers waxed jubilant or vituperative, according to their politics, about the prospect.

As a first step Lloyd George set up a Land Enquiry Committee, with A. H. Dyke Acland as chairman and C. Roden Buxton as hon. secretary, and a distinguished membership that included Seeböhm Rowntree and Ian Macpherson, to obtain “an accurate and impartial account of the social and economic conditions in the rural parts of Great Britain”, and of the “nature and working of the existing systems of ownership, tenancy and taxation and rating of land and buildings in urban districts and the surrounding neighbourhoods and their effect on industry and the conditions of life”. Subsidiary Committees were also set up to investigate the special conditions in Scotland and Wales.

The Committee got swiftly to work, and by the beginning of 1913 had collected a remarkable volume of evidence about the conditions in the countryside. Lloyd George now fired the first shot in his Land Campaign. A portrait of him in his Chancellor's robes, which had been subscribed for by Welshmen and painted by a Welsh artist, Christopher Williams, was being ceremonially unveiled on 31st January in the National Liberal Club. Lloyd George took this opportunity to deal, in his speech of acknowledgment, with the land question. He declared:

“Foremost amongst the tasks of Liberalism in the near future is the regeneration of rural life and the emancipation of the land of this country from the paralysing grip of a rusty, effete and unprofitable system. The land is the greatest, the most essential of our national assets. It is common ground that, at the present moment, it is not used

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to the best advantage in the interests of the community, and we are rapidly reaching a point where the gross waste of our national resources, human energy, human life, and opportunities involved in the perpetuation of that system means national weakness and national peril."

He sketched the work done by the Land Enquiry Committee and the information it had brought to light, especially as to the living conditions of land workers, who in the richest country under the sun, tilling a soil of high natural fertility, had neither decent homes nor a wage sufficient to keep themselves, their wives and their children above a state of semi-starvation. The land should produce twice as much good, healthy food; but he blamed the land system for discouraging enterprise in the farmer and driving the villager into the towns, where he depressed wages and increased unemployment. In the towns the land system bore heavily on traders and manufacturers, mulcting them for the profit of the ground landlord. The next great task of Liberalism must be to grapple with this and problem.

Planted as it was in a soil already deep-ploughed by the land taxes of his People's Budget, and harrowed by the violent controversies which those taxes had produced, the Land Campaign seemed destined to grow swiftly and become a vast political issue. But fate now dealt Lloyd George a cruel blow which temporarily crippled his activities, lowered his influence and severely shook his position. This was the eruption of the Marconi affair.

Not only the full light of day but the intolerable searchlight of a most exhaustive inquiry has beaten upon this affair and left no secret undisclosed. Even the most hostile members of the Inquiry—and some were, for personal reasons, bitterly hostile—were compelled to admit that Lloyd George's honour was proved to be completely unstained. But at the time he passed under a cloud, and was assailed by a quite unscrupulous campaign of rumour, accusation and obloquy. It is, indeed, a remarkable testimony to the adhesive properties of mud that long years afterwards one could still meet people who firmly believed that he had been involved in some disgraceful piece of corruption in connection with the Marconi affair!

The bald facts of the case can be briefly stated. The Committee of Imperial Defence insisted on the urgent necessity of setting up an Imperial Chain of Wireless Telegraphy, and the Postmaster-General, Herbert Samuel (now Lord Samuel), entered into negotiations with the British Marconi Company for the work, and on 7th March, 1912, accepted their tender, subject to parliamentary approval of the contract. As the Waddington Committee of distinguished scientists later reported, this was at the

time the only concern capable of carrying out long-distance wireless transmission. But the chairman of the Company, Godfrey Isaacs, was a brother of Sir Rufus Isaacs, the Attorney-General (later Lord Reading), and spiteful whispers were circulated that Samuel had been improperly influenced in the matter.

In the following month the American Marconi Company, which was proved at the subsequent Inquiry to be entirely independent financially of the British Company, made an issue of new shares to finance its taking over the assets of a bankrupt rival in the States, and Godfrey Isaacs agreed to place a block of these shares in England. He invited his brother Rufus to take some as they looked a good investment and were likely to appreciate when market dealings commenced. The Attorney-General refused; but his brother Harry took up 50,000 shares, which were being briskly scrambled for in America, and Rufus, after making careful inquiry and satisfying himself that the American firm was quite independent of the British one, agreed on 17th April to take 10,000 of Harry's holding at the current price—they had already risen from £1 1s. 3d. to £2. This was indiscreet in the circumstances, but was in no way essentially improper.

Rufus Isaacs was at that time seeing a good deal of Lloyd George and the Master of Elibank, and offered them 1,000 shares apiece out of his purchase, assuring them that the American firm was quite separate financially from the English one. Two days later, dealings in the shares opened on the London Stock Exchange at prices between £3 5s. and £4, and Rufus Isaacs promptly sold out most of his shares. At his prompting, Lloyd George and the Master of Elibank sold half their holding next day, but bought 1,500 apiece a month later as an investment.

As Lloyd George pointed out later at the Inquiry, there was no secrecy about this. He sold and bought openly in his own name. But the whispers about the Marconi contract now added that certain Ministers were speculating in Marconi shares; and grew as they passed from one to another till they were being embroidered with all kinds of fantastic tales of corruption. The *Outlook*, a paper owned by a Tory M.P., published a series of articles suggesting that there were improper relations between members of the Government and the Board of Marconi; and another weekly, the *Eye Witness*, translated these hints into explicit charges that the Postmaster-General was arranging to make heavy payments to the Company for the benefit of the Attorney-General and his brother, and that the Chancellor, too, was involved.

This mud-slinging became so violent that the Ministers concerned felt they must have the matter cleared up, and on 11th October, 1912, Samuel moved the appointment of a Select Committee of the House of Commons to investigate all the circumstances of the Agreement with

Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company. In the debate, George Lansbury made open reference to the report that Ministers had been gambling in Marconi shares. Sir Rufus Isaacs at once denied in set terms that he or any other Minister had had any dealings whatever in the firm's shares; but he chose, probably unwisely, and induced Lloyd George to agree, to keep any mention of dealings in the American Marconi shares for explanation to the Select Committee.

The Committee was duly set up under the chairmanship of Sir Albert Spicer, with 14 other members—6 Unionists, 5 Liberals, 2 Nationalists and 1 Labour. From the proceedings of the Committee it is quite clear that its Tory members were determined if they possibly could to unearth some evidence of corrupt or at least improper practices on the part of Liberal ministers—especially of Lloyd George, who had in fact the slightest connection of anyone with the affair, but was by far the most detested of the Liberal statesmen involved. For three months his private affairs, his bank pass-book and all his accounts were minutely examined by the Committee, which cross-questioned him to its heart's content.

The outcome of this lengthy ordeal was the complete vindication of Lloyd George and his friends from the accusations of corruption which had been so freely levelled at them. The journalists and editors of the papers which had published the charges admitted that they had never possessed any evidence to support their allegations beyond the existence of rumours, and had made no attempt to verify them. The Committee's efforts to track down those rumours to their source completely failed to disclose any more solid basis for them than political or personal antipathy and love of scandalmongering. The Committee's Report declared that there was no evidence whatever of any Minister using improper influence to secure the Government contract for the English Marconi Company, for dealing in any way in its shares; and that the charges made against Sir Rufus Isaacs, Lloyd George and Herbert Samuel were absolutely untrue and that the persons who made them had no reason to believe them to be true. A Minority Report by Lord Robert Cecil, who just then had strong reasons for bitter antipathy to Lloyd George, similarly admitted that there was absolutely no evidence of corruption, or use of official information for purposes of investment or speculation by any Minister, though it held that the investments in American Marconis should not have been made.

When the Committee's Report was debated in the House a resolution was adopted without a division, declaring:

"That this House, after hearing the statements of the Attorney-General and the Chancellor of the Exchequer in reference to their purchase of shares in the Marconi Company of America, accepts their expressions of regret that such purchases were made, and that they

were not mentioned in the debate of 11th October last; acquits them of acting otherwise than in good faith, and reprobates the charges of corruption brought against Ministers, which have been proved to be wholly false."

The chief sufferer in the whole affair was Lloyd George, though his share in it was the slightest, being no more than the making, on his friend's persuasion, of an investment on which, at the time of the Inquiry, he was about £500 out of pocket through a fall in the value of the shares. He had not bought them as a mere speculation. He was not himself a gambler, nor greatly interested in money-making. C. P. Scott, the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, writing to him on 7th June, 1913, remarked:

"Every honest and impartial person would I believe wholly acquit you of any sort or kind of improper motive and those who know you best will also know how little the desire of money-making enters into your composition."

That was true of Lloyd George. Reared in a frugal and unmoneyed household, under the influence of an uncle who cared so little for money that he would not collect the accounts due to him, Lloyd George set out with many eager ambitions, but the accumulation of money was very low in the list. He made money, of course; extremely capable and incredibly diligent, he could hardly fail to do so. But as his record in the South African War showed, his material fortune was as dust in the balance compared with his devotion to a cause. He was never for sale. As a Minister he lived within his income and invested his savings. When he agreed to take some of the American Marconi shares from his friend Rufus Isaacs, he did so for investment, as the evidence of his broker showed at the Inquiry.

The worst fault that could be attributed to him was a lapse of discretion in doing something which, innocent in itself, was capable of being misrepresented, and a misjudgment in the subsequent handling of the matter that allowed a mountain to be built by enemies out of a mole-hill. In a letter to Winston Churchill, when the Inquiry was in progress, Lord Northcliffe sharply criticized the handling of the affair:

"The system of making mysteries of pieces of evidence in the enquiry, and doling them out like a serial story, has had a bad effect on the public, though as a matter of fact, the whole Marconi business looms much larger in Downing Street than among the mass of the people. The total number of letters received by my newspapers has been exactly three—one of which was printed, and the other two were foolish.

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"The method of dragging the thing out really does make some people think that there is something behind it all, though I personally, as I had your word for it that there is not, know there is not. If they had only taken the trouble to refer to 'The Prince' they would have issued a twenty-line paragraph in the Political Notes of *The Times* giving all the facts, and little more would have been heard of the subject. My own belief is that both of them throughout the whole matter have greatly lacked sense of proportion and foresight."

There the matter may rest. There are no hidden facts remaining to be unearthed, and Lloyd George's own private papers about the affair add nothing that is not already public knowledge. The simple truth is that a vast mass of rumour and suspicion, fostered and magnified by the political bitterness of the time and in some instances by personal antipathies, was allowed to gain undue currency through a mistaken policy of hush-hush. Anyone who still believes those calumnies would equally, no doubt, cling stolidly to the conviction that a large force of Russians "with snow on their boots" really passed through Britain in the autumn of 1914! John Redmond summed up the situation when, speaking at Dulwich on 5th July, 1913, he said:

"For 70 days our inquiry continued, and the result was that, although some curs are still snarling and whimpering and crawling about, every man in the House of Commons was obliged to admit that no single thing had been proved against the honour and good name of Mr. Lloyd George!"

All the same, it had been a bad setback. When the storm was at its height Lloyd George offered to resign his office, but Asquith would not hear of it. The comradeship between the two was at that time very close and loyal. During the first half of 1913, however, Lloyd George's political work was half paralysed, and for the time being his Land Campaign had to stay on ice.

He started to heat it up again in the autumn. The Land Committee's Report on Rural Land conditions was published in October, and Lloyd George thereupon reopened his campaign with two great speeches at Bedford and Swindon, on 11th and 22nd October. He was not now seeking to provoke opposition as he had been when advocating the Land Taxes in his 1909 Budget. He wanted to go as far as possible towards securing all-party support for his programme; and by no means all the big landowners were on the other side. There were a number among the chief supporters of the Government, and his speeches did not attack landowners, but appealed to them to support his policy. Its main features

were the setting up of a Ministry of Land, which would absorb the Board of Agriculture, register land titles, simplify transfers, complete the land valuation, and appoint Commissioners to promote good farming, smallholdings, land reclamation and afforestation; provision of a statutory minimum wage and better housing for farm labourers; and security of tenure for good farmers, with compensation for disturbance.

A letter from a farmer, alleging that pheasants pecked and damaged his mangel-wurzels, which Lloyd George quoted at Bedford, caused an amusing newspaper controversy. Indignant squires rushed to the defence of the pheasants, denying that they ate mangel-wurzels, and declaring that Lloyd George clearly knew nothing about agriculture. But such authorities as the editor of *The Field* and the Tory landowner, Capt. Pretyma, M.P., asserted that they did sometimes peck at these roots and damage them, especially in dry weather. The joke about the pheasant and its mangel-wurzel was, however, worn threadbare for a full generation thereafter by certain Tory organs. 1

On 21st November, 1913, Lloyd George carried his campaign into the unfamiliar atmosphere of the Oxford Union. He had a packed house and a difficult, predominantly hostile, audience. He was invited to speak to a motion: "That this House has no confidence in the Land Policy of His Majesty's Government." The occasion called up all his uncanny powers of divining the mind of his audience and adapting himself to it. He had a sheaf of notes, but discarded them, steering his oratorical course by instinct, sheering away from one line of argument to another as he sensed the reaction of the meeting. The upshot was a triumph such as his warmest supporters had not expected, for the motion was defeated by 68 votes—654 against 586. The President of the Union was Gilbert Talbot, son of the Bishop of Winchester, and his mother wrote to L.G. two days later:

"May I take this opportunity of thanking you for all you did in making your Union and Oxford visit so happy a one to my son—he had his anxieties beforehand, as you can imagine, but now he will be proud that so successful and interesting an 'open evening' fell to his lot as President of the Oxford Union."

Walter Monckton, the seconder of the motion condemning the Government's policy, also wrote to L.G.:

"Least I should seem ungrateful, let me thank you at once for your extremely generous and kindly treatment of my speech. Although I have not yet fulfilled your prophecy by becoming a Radical, I must admit that now I have met you, I shall have to make considerable alterations in my platform perorations."

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His experience was a not uncommon one. People reared in Tory circles, accustomed to hear Lloyd George denounced as a tub-thumping scoundrel of the most repulsive kind, were amazed on meeting him to find a courteous, humorous and understanding person, clear-thinking and remarkably free from prejudices or shibboleths, ready to discuss practical issues in a spirit of open-minded sincerity, to seek common ground and reach a common purpose. This attitude, which stirred suspicion among the stiffly orthodox of his own Party, aided his personal relations with opponents, several of whom became his warm friends.

Despite his platform triumphs, however, the Land Campaign, with which he had hoped to crown his reforming efforts, never reached fruition. The delay and personal setback caused by the Marconi affair had wasted precious months. Kipling makes one of his characters remark: "What a man does doesn't matter much; and how he does it don't matter either. It's the *when*—the psychological moment." Lloyd George had lost the psychological moment. By the time his campaign was at last launched Home Rule and the Ulster revolt were pressing forward to fill the front of the political stage and preoccupy the Government. They grew ever more importunate until domestic issues were swept aside by the outbreak of the First World War.

A notable development of those years was the widening division between the Liberals and the new Labour Party. At first, many Liberals had welcomed the advent of a handful of Members of Parliament representing the views and interests of organized labour and gingering up the cause of social reform. They counted this new force as a valuable ally and in certain constituencies the Labour candidate was given Liberal support and a straight fight with the Tory. But as the movement grew it claimed more seats and in 1911 war started in the constituencies, Labour contesting former Liberal seats, thereby splitting the vote and letting in the Tory. In the House Labour took an independent line, not infrequently attacking and voting against the Government. By 1912 Lloyd George was forecasting to his friends that this new Labour movement would eventually oust the Liberal Party, to the disadvantage of the nation.

A perpetually running sore was the violent conduct of the militant suffragettes. While they interrupted all meetings addressed by members of the Government they concentrated especially against Lloyd George, although he was known to be the strongest advocate in the Cabinet of votes for women. At all his meetings it was usual for the first quarter of an hour to be mainly taken up with ejecting suffragist interrupters who tried to deny him a hearing. Missiles were flung at him in the street; a metal-bound case nearly damaged his eye. On 19th February, 1913, a house which was being built for him at Walton Heath was blown up on Mrs. Pankhurst's orders. She was sentenced to three years' imprisonment,

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but like other suffragettes went on hunger-strike and had to be repeatedly enlarged for a spell under the "Cat and Mouse Act" [Prisoners (Temporary Discharge for Illhealth) Act, 1913]. The Cabinet was divided on the issue. Asquith was grimly opposed to Women's Suffrage. At first there was a majority of the Party in its favour, but the campaign of militancy so embittered opinion that in February 1914 Lloyd George had regretfully to tell a Suffrage deputation:

"I am afraid that the position is quite hopeless so far as this Parliament is concerned. . . . Unfortunately, militant methods have made it almost impossible for those Liberal leaders who are in favour of women's suffrage to address meetings in support of it. . . . Meetings that I have addressed on the subject have been completely upset by the extreme suffragists, and I am sure that lots of people went away feeling how hopeless a thing it was "

Militancy persisted up to the outbreak of the First World War. Whether on balance it did more harm or good to the cause of Women's Suffrage is still debated; but L.G. was quite clear that it was a serious hindrance.

By far the most dangerous of the political and social disturbances in those pre-war years was the Ulster agitation against the Home Rule Bill. The Scots of Ulster were always, from the earliest times, somewhat aloof from the rest of Ireland, and the plantation of Scottish Presbyterians in North-East Ulster in James I's reign accentuated this divergence. In race, religion, regional tradition and not least in material wealth and industry they stood apart from the Catholic Irish of the South. They had opposed Gladstone's former Home Rule proposals, not so much from devotion to Great Britain and the Imperial Parliament—in 1800 Ulster had opposed the Union of the Irish and English Parliaments—as from determination to maintain the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland and their own independence from the Catholic South. Now, when another Home Rule Bill was slowly lumbering along the steeplechase course furnished by the Parliament Act towards the Statute Book, they waxed frantic with alarm. Sir Edward Carson set to work to organize their opposition, with F. E. Smith (afterwards Lord Birkenhead) as his lieutenant. On 25th September, 1912 an elaborate ceremony was staged at Portadown, where a Solemn Covenant was signed by large numbers of Orangemen, pledging them to use all means which might be found necessary to resist Home Rule. A force of Ulster Volunteers was formed, drilled and armed, with the avowed object of staging a rebellion if the Home Rule Bill were carried.

Lloyd George was in a quandary. He had always supported Home

Rule, which was demanded by four-fifths of the Irish, including nearly half the population of Ulster. He had negotiated the pact on Home Rule with the Nationalist Party. But his early training had imbued him with an anti-papal bias which made him sympathize with the Evangelical Protestants of Ulster. Besides, they claimed with some warrant to be a tiny nation in fear of suffering tyranny and exploitation by their larger neighbour, Southern Ireland. So he set to work to try for some compromise solution of the impasse, and by the autumn of 1913 was studying the possibility of excluding from the scope of the Bill the six counties of Ulster which had a Protestant majority.

In the spring of 1914 the situation grew desperate. On account of the danger that arms depots in Ulster might be looted by the "loyalist" rebels, the troops garrisoning Ireland were ordered in March to arrange to guard them. Thereupon General Gough and 57 other officers at the Curragh offered to resign their commissions, declaring that in no circumstances would they take arms to enforce Home Rule on Ulster. In April the Ulster Volunteers ran in at Larne a huge consignment of arms kindly furnished by Germany, whose Kaiser had his own reasons for welcoming the prospect of civil war in Britain. Other consignments were later run in by them, although the importation of arms into Ireland was illegal; but when in July the Nationalist Volunteers similarly tried to run in some arms at Howth, the military intervened and there was bloodshed. The Government at Westminster might favour Home Rule, but the military and police authorities in Ireland were defiantly Unionist and openly talked sedition.

Lloyd George was in ceaseless consultation with the leaders on both sides, and innumerable plans for a solution of the problem were thrust upon him and considered. But the Nationalists would not contemplate any permanent severance of Ulster from the rest of Ireland, and the Orangemen would accept nothing else. Devlin confidentially suggested that any Ulster county might be given the right to vote itself out of the Irish Parliament after ten years. T. P. O'Connor proposed that counties could opt out of Home Rule for a maximum of three years. Asquith toyed with the idea of delimiting a "Statutory Ulster" where Orangemen were in a majority, and reserving to them certain powers over education and local government and a veto on the extension to them of legislation by the Irish Parliament affecting their taxation or religious or educational interests. Churchill and F. E. Smith produced a scheme for a declaration of intention to introduce a Federal system for the British Isles in which Ulster might have its own place. Edwin Montagu also made suggestions on these lines, hinting that Ulster might choose to become part of Scotland or England in the new Federal system.

On 12th May, Asquith announced that the Home Rule Bill would be

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passed as it stood, but promised an Amending Bill to embody whatever solution of the Ulster problem could be agreed. This Amending Bill, introduced in the Lords on 23rd June, gave the right to any Ulster county to vote itself out of the operation of the Home Rule Bill for six years. Redmond and his Nationalists had been persuaded by Lloyd George to accept this; but in the Lords so many new clauses were added by the Tories that the resulting Bill was utterly unacceptable to Ireland. Thereupon the King called a Conference at Buckingham Palace to see if some solution could be found. The Conference consisted of two representatives each of the Government, Opposition, Nationalists and Ulster Unionists, Asquith and Lloyd George being the Government members. Four days, from 21st to 24th July, 1914, were spent in earnest but unavailing discussions. Then the Conference broke up in failure, and civil war seemed inevitable. But before that disaster could materialize a vaster war-cloud spread swiftly across the European sky.



*Part IV*  
THE MAN WHO WON THE WAR  
1914—1918



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE STRANGE LAND OF WAR

ONLY small men with closed minds can sustain through their lives a façade of consistency. Lloyd George was not a small man, and his mind was extremely alert and receptive. There were, it is true, certain guiding purposes—purposes rather than principles—to which he was constant throughout his career. But it would be as inaccurate as it would be unflattering to claim that his views and actions were always consistent with one another.

Nowhere was this inconsistency more marked or more puzzling to his contemporaries than in respect of his attitude to war. To understand Lloyd George one must realize that he had the tastes and instincts of a fighter, but the training and ethical principles of a peace-maker. His was a fighter's face: firm, resolute, and in anger terrible, when his eyes became like blue stones and his jaw set grim and savage. War histories were a favourite subject for his reading and he had a masterly knowledge of the strategy and tactics used by generals in all the great conflicts from classic times to the American Civil War. But he had been reared by his gentle-spirited uncle in an evangelical Christian tradition which revered the Prince of Peace and abhorred war as a devilish evil. Intellectually he accepted that view. The prizes for which he strove—social betterment, human justice, education, health, prosperity—were the fruits of peace. So, while never an academic pacifist, he was a practical peace-seeker. Ready with a clear conscience to oppose injustice and oppression by force of arms, if need arose, he held war to be an evil and not a necessary one.

Pacifists who thought him, on his record in the Boer War, to be one of themselves, were disconcerted when at the time of the Agadir crisis in 1911 he declared that there were issues for which he would be prepared to fight. Their pacifism made them disapprove of patriotism, Imperialism, or any other sentiment for which men might be stirred up to fight. Lloyd George had an intense native patriotism and a pride and faith in the British Empire. He had no real sympathy with their censorious self-righteousness. But he went with them to the extent of morally disapproving of war if it could be avoided.

At the time of the Agadir crisis he had become acutely aware of the German menace. But presently his realization of it grew dimmer as he immersed himself once more in his schemes of social reform. As Chancellor he was markedly successful in raising revenue, but he wanted to keep as much of it as he could for pensions, insurance, housing, education

and other beneficent objects, and grudged every penny he had to divert to warlike preparations. Close friend as he was of Winston Churchill, he was repeatedly at loggerheads with him between 1912 and 1914 because the First Lord insisted on keeping the Navy up to a level adequate to overtop the rapidly growing German Fleet. L.G. even tried to shut his eyes to the reality of that menace. In 1912 the Kaiser signed a new Navy Law, which made a formidable increase in the striking force of his Home Fleet. Churchill managed to get hold of a copy and circulated it to the Cabinet with a covering Memorandum drawing attention to its dangers. The high proportion of battle or armoured cruisers to be kept in full commission might be intended, suggested Churchill, for use as commerce destroyers. “? *Protectors*” noted L.G. on his copy; and against the big increase in submarines he jotted “*Defence*”! Such an ostrich attitude was not usual with him, but a European war seemed such insanity that many could hardly believe it would really happen.

That attitude received its fullest expression in an interview which he gave to the *Daily Chronicle* on 1st January, 1914, when he asserted that our relations with Germany were infinitely more friendly than they had been for years. There was of course some excuse for this; for although all efforts to persuade the Kaiser to agree to a naval building holiday had failed, it was true that Sir Edward Grey had made good progress towards an agreement with Germany about the Berlin-Baghdad railway, and had reached an understanding as to the interpretation of the secret treaty made in 1898 with her by Lord Salisbury about Germany's acquisition of the Portuguese colonies in Africa if Portugal decided to sell them. But those moves could hardly outweigh such ominous facts as the feverish growth of the German Fleet, the hurrying on of the Kiel Canal, and the mounting bellicosity of responsible German opinion among officers, politicians, aristocracy, professors and professional classes, who openly and eagerly anticipated the coming war with England which was to make Germany the dominant World Power and secure to her a “place in the sun”.

Lloyd George did not want to believe it, and had a fierce struggle in the Cabinet with Churchill over the Naval Estimates for 1914, which reached the record figure of over £51½ million—nearly £5¼ million more than the original Estimates for the previous year and £18 million more than the naval expenditure of the Tories in 1905-6. The sympathies of Asquith and a majority of the Cabinet were with Lloyd George, who was bringing in a new system of local grants for Education and Health Services as well as providing more funds for his National Insurance Scheme. Churchill very nearly resigned, for he would not budge from his insistence on keeping up the margin of British naval superiority over Germany. But eventually a compromise formula for the Estimates was

found which effected some cuts on paper while giving the First Lord the substance of the expansion he held to be immediately necessary.

This then was the attitude of the future great War Premier in the months immediately preceding the outbreak of the First World War. He saw no serious probability of war; no reason to suppose that diplomacy could not deal with any trouble which might arise between the Great Powers; and only with the utmost reluctance did he agree to allocate extra funds for what he held to be a wasteful and needless expansion of the Navy.

Even after the event he could not entirely abandon this view. In his *War Memoirs* (Ch. II, Sect. 2) he devoted some space to arguing that "Nobody Wanted War"; and suggested that the principals drifted and slid it into it without purpose or premeditation. There is, however, evidence that the war, if not predetermined, was certainly planned for by Germany at substantially the date when it actually occurred. Admiral Fisher, indeed, foretold away back in 1911 that Germany would start "Armageddon" in October 1914, and was only two months out. In 1913 the German Government raised a special one-year capital levy of 1,000 million marks for armaments, to be spent within 12 months. By August 1914 the Kiel Canal was open for the passage of Dreadnoughts, and the German gold reserve had been brought to its highest level. The heads of the German Army and Navy certainly wanted war and planned on the assumption that it might occur then. The wayward and egotistical Kaiser played with the idea like a small boy with a box of matches who dreams of setting fire to the curtains to see the blaze. He was sure he had the finest army in the world and the most efficient navy. He was bred in the Prussian faith that war always paid them, and was their proper way to settle affairs with other nations. It would be a short and glorious fight: France crushed in six weeks and Russia in six months; England isolated, to have her commerce destroyed by the German Navy and be forced to cede World Empire to the Reich. Not least, a victorious war would sweep back the rising tide of Social Democracy in Germany, which menaced his Imperial absolutism if not his throne, and re-establish Kaiserdom and military autocracy. So when the Sarajevo assassination furnished a highly convenient pretext he could not bring himself to forgo the opportunity.

It was on 28th June, 1914, that the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, was shot and killed at Sarajevo in Bosnia. Lloyd George, immersed in the negotiations about Ireland, spared little thought to it; and indeed, there was not at first any sign that it was to be used as a pretext for a European war. Votes of sympathy with the Austrian Emperor were passed in both Houses, and the matter dismissed from mind. Sir Edward Grey, moving the Foreign Office Vote on 10th July,

talked about Persian Concessions and Chinese Railways, but not about a war danger. But on 23rd July Austria sent an ultimatum to Serbia, on the pretext that the Bosnian murder had been instigated by Serbs. Though the demands made in the ultimatum were intolerably harsh, Serbia agreed to nearly all of them. The gesture was vain. War had been decided on, with the consent of the Kaiser, though it was certain that an attack on Serbia would bring in Russia, and that her ally, France, must be involved. On 28th July, Austria declared war on Serbia.

Sir Edward Grey had striven desperately during the intervening five days to get the issue dealt with by diplomatic conference, but his proposals were brushed aside. The German High Command was not to be robbed of its war. The German Government had strong hopes that Britain would remain neutral at the outset, while her potential allies were being crushed; for Britain, though linked with France by an Entente, had no military alliance with her, and several members of the Cabinet, including Lloyd George, its most formidable figure, were understood to be pacifists. Besides, Ulster was known to be on the brink of a civil war, for which the Kaiser had been at pains to arm her. That would surely preoccupy Britain till the French ports in the Channel and on the Atlantic were in German hands, and the day of reckoning with Britain—"Der Tag", which German naval officers nightly toasted in eager anticipation—could dawn.

There was some warrant for this notion. Grey, Haldane and Churchill, with the support of Asquith and of fully half the Cabinet, realized from the outset that honour and self-defence alike bound us to support France if war came. But on the other side were certain uncompromising pacifists, Lord Morley, John Burns and Charles Trevelyan, who would have nothing to do with a war, and resigned from the Government when war was actually declared; and another group, headed by Lloyd George, who thought a war unnecessary and did not want Britain to be drawn in. Had the Germans refrained from invading Belgium and given an undertaking not to send their Fleet down the Channel to attack the northern and western coasts of France—which under a naval agreement had been left in the care of the British Fleet while the French Navy policed the Mediterranean—this group would probably have held out against immediate participation in the war, and Britain would have fought, if at all, with a divided mind.

The Conservatives were untroubled by any such doubts. On 2nd August their leader sent a private note to the Premier in the following terms:

"Dear Mr. Asquith,

"Lord Lansdowne and I feel it our duty to inform you that in our opinion as well as in that of all the colleagues with whom we have

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been able to consult, it would be fatal to the honour and security of the United Kingdom to hesitate in supporting France and Russia at the present juncture; and we offer our unhesitating support to the Government in any measures they may consider necessary for that object.

"Yours very truly,  
"A. BONAR LAW."

Germany had already declared war on Russia on Friday, 31st July, following the Czar's rejection of a German ultimatum demanding the demobilization of his armies. Her immediate attack, however, was launched against France, in accordance with the Schlieffen Plan which for years she had held in readiness. This involved an advance through Belgium to turn the French line and thrust down on Paris from the north-east. The likelihood of this plan being adopted was fully realized in Whitehall, and urgent demands were made on both France and Germany for assurances that Belgium's neutrality and integrity would be respected. While Britain was under no binding contract to defend France or Russia, she was pledged to maintain the security and independence of Belgium. France promptly gave the required assurances. None, of course, was forthcoming from Germany, and by 3rd August the Cabinet learned that she had presented a 12-hour ultimatum to King Albert, demanding free passage through Belgium. The ultimatum was promptly rejected, and German troops marched into Belgium and Luxemburg.

The menace to Belgium united the Cabinet—apart from the unbending pacifists—in a decision to enter the war. For Lloyd George it was conclusive. "I never doubted," he stated in his *War Memoirs*, "that if the Germans interfered with the integrity and independence of Belgium, we were in honour bound to discharge our treaty obligations to that country." He sided with the war in this case for much the same reasons as had made him oppose the South African War—because a little country was being attacked unjustly by a big bullying Power. He knew, of course, as every British statesman must, that the independence of Belgium was important for British security; but while that knowledge reinforced his decision it did not inspire it. He acted, as in the big crises throughout his career he constantly did, on those basic instinctive impulses which irresistibly drove him to side with the underdog. "Would you consider L.G. a good man to go tiger-shooting with?" a friend of his was once asked. He replied: "That would depend on how L.G. regarded the tiger. If he thought it a bullying beast, preying on the poor peasantry like some tyrannous landlord, devouring their cattle and threatening their lives, he would be splendid. But if he saw it as a poor hunted creature, driven from its simple jungle lair by millionaire landowners on elephants, he would be liable to take sides with the tiger!"

The immediate tasks confronting the Chancellor of the Exchequer were, however, economic rather than martial. At the first threat of war chaos threatened in the realms of international commerce and finance, of which London was the headquarters. Share prices slumped, the New York foreign exchange market broke down, and with the actual outbreak of war stock exchanges everywhere closed and a run on banks began. Lloyd George brought his ingenious and resourceful mind, his powers of swift decision and his inexhaustible energy, to bear on the situation. Through the last days of July and the week-end round Sunday, 2nd August, he toiled sleeplessly with the leading bankers, the heads of the Stock Exchange and his Treasury advisers, to plan and put into effect measures to deal with the crisis. As immediate precautions, the Exchange was closed and the bank rate pushed up to 10%. On Monday, 3rd August, a moratorium (the Postponement of Payments Act) was rushed through Parliament, a Royal Proclamation was issued postponing for a month the maturity of bills of exchange, and the bank holiday extended until Friday morning. Three days later the Currency and Banknotes Act was similarly rushed through, empowering the Treasury to issue Treasury Notes in lieu of the gold sovereigns and half-sovereigns which until then had been the normal coinage jingling in British pockets. Altogether some 30 Acts of Parliament were carried during August to deal with the emergency created by the war, and with most of them the Exchequer had a direct concern.

It was freely acknowledged, even by his bitterest political opponents, that the genius, resource and swift action of Lloyd George in face of this entirely unprecedented situation saved the country from very grave financial disaster. The leading figures in the City, who only a few weeks earlier had been howling for his blood, now declared that he ought to be made an earl! Austen Chamberlain, who had been called into consultation as a former Chancellor and had seen his work at close quarters, rose in the House of Commons on 7th August to offer him congratulations on the success of his measures, and on 26th August, after remarking that it had not been his habit to lavish unmixed praise on Lloyd George, Chamberlain told his Tory supporters in the House:

"I hope they will give me credit for sincerity when I say that I think the Chancellor of the Exchequer has handled a very difficult situation with great tact, great skill and great judgement."

Lloyd George's measures were, in fact, so well devised that they entirely averted what would otherwise have been the most disastrous crash in financial history—for the banks and accepting houses of the City were the hub of world finance. He took the responsibility—he was never

afraid of responsibility—for pledging the Government's credit in support of extensive advances by the Bank of England to pay off the load of bills carried by the City and get the wheels of commerce turning once again. In all, about £500 million were guaranteed, and in the end mostly recovered. The bank rate swiftly slid down again to 5%, the discount market resumed business, and after legislation had been carried for the protection of debtors it was possible, early in November, to lift the moratorium.

One of Lloyd George's most marked characteristics was the whole-hearted way in which he threw himself into any task which he undertook. It sometimes led to misunderstanding and to charges of fickleness and unreliability, because people got the impression that he had deserted a former interest when in fact he had only pushed it aside temporarily while he dealt with the business in hand. Up to July 1914 he had been driving at his social reform schemes, grudging every penny that had to be diverted from them to defence expenditure. Now, his Welsh fighting blood roused, he swung round and concentrated everything on the national struggle, and was ready to pour out money without limit to provide the sinews of war. On 6th August a vote of credit for £100 million was moved and adopted, and on 26th August Lloyd George brought in a War Loan Bill empowering the Government to raise by loan "any money required" for the conduct of the war. On 16th November a further vote of credit for £225 million was carried and next day Lloyd George brought in a supplementary Budget, doubling Income Tax and Supertax and making a big increase in the tax on beer. He also issued the first War Loan, for £350 million at 3½%. It was calamitous for the country that his successors at the Treasury did not keep down to this rate, but offered 4½% for the second War Loan in June 1915, and 5% for subsequent loans, thus burdening future Governments with huge liabilities for interest.

Having re-established the nation's finances and raised great sums for war expenditure, Lloyd George proceeded to take a keen interest in seeing that the money was put to effective use.

Here he suffered his first close experience of the hidebound and arthritic character of War Office administration. From the days of Wellington it had snored under the incubus of a blimpish tradition of lethargy, formality and arrogant inactivity. Thence had come the fearful bungling of the Crimean campaign, and the muddle and corruption of the South African War. Thence were to come, during this First World War, some deplorable instances of blinkered inefficiency. Things are better now, no doubt; but in the past Britain won her wars in spite of her War Office, through the competence of her generals and the toughness of her troops; and her more brilliant generals, from Wellington to Montgomery, have been openly disliked and belittled by the carpet warriors of

Whitehall. L.G. received the same hindrances and rebuffs from the "clique within a clique" that the young Wellington had encountered a century before.

Lloyd George supposed that the War Office would be delighted to be given the offer of vast sums to provide munitions for the war effort, and would at once take steps to mobilize the enormous engineering potential of the country to turn out the arms needed for the troops. Nothing of the kind; the War Office saw no reason to depart from its traditional leisurely procedure or to go outside the narrow ring of regular armament firms. It placed extensive orders with these, but did nothing effective to secure that the orders would be executed promptly; and when Lloyd George placed £20 million at its disposal to use in grants to armament firms for extensions of their premises and plant, the Master-General of the Ordnance carefully concealed this fact from the firms concerned.

The truth was, of course, that a modern European war on land was a quite unprecedented experience, and the authorities had no conception of the scale of munitions or the kinds that would be required, and could not adjust their elderly minds to this novel problem. By September, Sir John French was clamouring for high-explosive shells to smash the German entrenchments, but the War Office, still in its dreams fighting the Boer War, would only send shrapnel, and doled out its shells in the quantities "which were laid down before the war". This meant about seven shells per gun per day.

This dithering roused Lloyd George. He had never had any use for stagnant traditionalism, and his instinct was for prompt realistic activity. In September he put forward a proposal for a special Cabinet Committee to examine the question of arms production. Kitchener, who had been called to the War Office by Asquith as soon as war was declared, opposed any such civilian interference with military matters, and the Cabinet turned it down. But in October, when reports from the front were growing more alarming, L.G. was successful in getting the Committee appointed. Thereby he was able to effect a big increase in the orders for guns, and by getting into touch with the armament firms themselves he could make direct offers to them of financial help in extending their works and increasing their output. He also arranged for the placing of orders in America for rifles—which roused the opposition of Van Donop, the Master-General of Ordnance, who held that any rifles coming after May 1915 would be unwanted!

Lloyd George was never one to wear out an office chair. Habitually he preferred to get out among the people for whom he wished to legislate and learn as directly as possible what was needed. The officials in his various Ministries had soon found that he was not content to read memoranda expounding their views about departmental problems, but called

them in for a talk at which he could discuss the issue from all angles. So now, realizing that this matter of munition supply was the vital issue of the moment, he decided to visit the Front and see for himself how matters stood.

On 16th October, 1914, he crossed to Dieppe, taking with him Lord Reading and Sir John Simon. The victory of the Marne and the German retreat to the Aisne had taken place in mid-September, and the party motored to Paris across a partly devastated countryside. They discussed with the French Government the methods adopted in France to mobilize industry for war purposes, gathering information which was later of great value to L.G. when he set up the Ministry of Munitions. They then went on to visit the front, where L.G. interviewed the leading French generals, but missed General French at the British G.H.Q., as Sir John was away fighting the first Battle of Ypres.

War is an affair of arms and the man. If Lloyd George concerned himself deeply with the question of arms production, he was no less active in promoting recruiting. This brought him up against novel psychological problems arising from the mass recruiting of particular types of civilians. As a Welshman and a Nonconformist he realized acutely the importance of meeting the needs of those categories, but found it no easy matter to hammer his knowledge into Kitchener's head. Kitchener had spent most of his life outside England, and had a vast ignorance of the ways of life and thought of the British civilian. He knew that the Army traditionally recognized the existence of Church of England, Roman Catholic, Presbyterian and Wesleyan troops and provided chaplains for them, though he did not in the least appreciate their doctrinal and ritual distinctions; but the other Free Church denominations were not even names to him. Probably the small pre-war Regular Army contained few strong adherents of those sects. Now, however, thousands of Baptists, Congregationalists, Primitive Methodists, Welsh Calvinistic Methodists and other brands of Free Churchmen swelled the ranks of the new Kitchener armies. Lloyd George insisted to the Cabinet that chaplains must be provided for them. Kitchener stubbornly opposed the idea. He had no conception of the strong sectarian loyalties which were a marked feature of English domestic society prior to the war. During the Education Bill controversy he had been in India as Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army.

Lloyd George had the strong backing of the Free Churches, led by Dr. J. H. Shakespeare, the statesmanlike secretary of the Baptist Union, and after some explosive scenes in the Cabinet he won his case. Thereupon Kitchener with a good grace accepted the situation, and agreed to the setting up of the United Board to represent the Free Churches and recruit chaplains from among their clergy to serve the new armies.

Lloyd George had a similar fight with Kitchener over the issue of a Welsh Division. The great soldier was familiar with the idea of English and Scottish divisions, but though he knew there were Welsh regiments he considered Wales far too insignificant to merit a division. Lloyd George, however, realized the immense psychological value for the recruiting campaign in Wales of the promise of such a formation, and when Kitchener turned it down he fought it through the Cabinet and won the day. At the end of October the matter was settled and on L.G.'s recommendation a Welsh officer, Col. Owen Thomas, was promoted by Kitchener to Brigadier-General and ordered to organize the new formation. L.G. failed, however, to secure a similar division for Ireland.

In spite of his many other preoccupations, he managed to take an active part in the Welsh recruiting campaign, on behalf of which he made some notable speeches during the September to Welsh audiences in London, Cardiff and Criccieth. The greatest of them all—in some respects perhaps the finest oration ever delivered by him—was the speech he made at the Queen's Hall on 19th September, 1914, to a gathering of 3,000 Welshmen. Its peroration, which swept the vast audience on to their feet, will live long as a prose poem of unforgettable splendour.

"May I tell you in a simple parable what I think this war is doing for us: I know a valley in North Wales, between the mountains and the sea. It is a beautiful valley, snug, comfortable, sheltered by the mountains from all the bitter blasts. But it is very enervating, and I remember how the boys were in the habit of climbing the hill above the village to have a glimpse of the great mountains in the distance, and to be stimulated and freshened by the breezes which came from the hill-tops, and by the great spectacle of their grandeur.

"We have been living in a sheltered valley for generations. We have been too comfortable and too indulgent—many, perhaps, too selfish—and the stern hand of Fate has scourged us to an elevation where we can see the great everlasting things that matter for a nation—the great peaks we had forgotten, of Honour, Duty, Patriotism, and, clad in glittering white, the great pinnacle of Sacrifice pointing like a rugged finger to Heaven. We shall descend into the valleys again; but as long as the men and women of this generation last, they will carry in their hearts the image of those great mountain peaks whose foundations are not shaken, though Europe rock and sway in the convulsions of a great war."

It was an electric speech, which stirred the whole country. He was deluged with letters of appreciation from fellow Ministers, Tory leaders, foreign diplomats, prominent authors and journalists and other national

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figures, many of whom owed to having been in the past his bitter opponents, but all of them hailing his speech as the finest thing they had ever heard or read. This may be reckoned the first of L.G.'s great war speeches. The country was at that time rich in brilliant orators, among whom such men as Asquith, Churchill, Haldane, Balfour, Redmond and a host of others could be named. But as the struggle wore on Lloyd George rose far above them all as the speaker who appealed most directly and powerfully to the British public. He became the voice of the nation, inspiring and expressing their will to victory.

While he continued to interest himself deeply in the problem of getting weapons for the troops to use, and helping the recruiting campaign for the new armies, Lloyd George soon began to make a keen study of the strategical problems of the conflict. He had, it is true, no practical experience of war, and no professional training in its theory, though he had for an amateur a remarkable familiarity with the history of military operations. But in any case the war of 1914-18 was in many ways a quite new kind of conflict, not only in the unprecedented size of the forces engaged and the vast extent of the battle front, but in the weight of ordnance used, the motor transport, aircraft, barbed wire and, ultimately, tanks. It was a new war to the professional as well as the amateur, and a new type of strategy was needed to fit the unprecedented conditions, a strategy which in fact only began to take shape in the closing months of the war, and reached its full development in the Second World War, when impregnable defence fortifications like the Maginot or Siegfried Lines crumbled or were turned and rendered futile by the weight of bombardment and the onrush of heavily mechanized forces.

Lloyd George had the knack of frequently seeing further through a brick wall than his fellows, and he formed his own heterodox notion of how the new war should be conducted—heterodox, because he was before his time by a quarter of a century. He held that flesh and blood should be economized by the lavish use of equipment and munitions; and that instead of pitting our forces, bull-fashion, against the maximum strength of the enemy in brainless frontal assault, we should try to slip under the enemy's guard, to attack where he was weakest and where there was the best chance of getting through to a vulnerable spot.

With this second object in view he hunted the map to find where such a profitable blow could be struck, and decided in favour of the Balkan front. He became what is known as an Easterner, in distinction from the Westerners, who thought our whole strength ought to be concentrated in France and Flanders, where the Germans were massed in force behind their defences and where war became a slow, reciprocal grinding down, a mutual massacre, at the end of which, so the Westerners counted, the Allies with their larger forces would have some troops

surviving as victors. They treated war as a game of draughts. Lloyd George wanted to play it as a game of chess, where the enemy could be checkmated, however many of his pieces might still be standing.

So on 1st January, 1915, he had the temerity to venture into the field of strategy, and sent a memorandum to the War Council, entitled "Suggestions as to the Military Position." In this Memorandum he pointed out that a position of stalemate had already been reached on the Western Front with its endless line of entrenchments, and that the policy of attrition offered no prospect of early victory. Accordingly he recommended that the Western Front should be held with only sufficient troops for defence, not attack, and that a large force should be sent to the Balkans, based on Salonika or, better still, on the Dalmatian coast, to thrust up at the weak under-belly of the Central Powers, in alliance with the Serbs and Roumanians and Austria's Slavonic subjects of Bosnia, Croatia and Slovenia. This would prevent Bulgaria from joining with the enemy and would bring in Italy on the Allied side. It would force the Austrians to weaken their Russian front, and enable the Russians to pour across Hungary and menace Budapest and Vienna. Another foray should be launched against Turkey through Syria, hamstringing the Turkish forces that were pressing on the Suez Canal. These moves would, he submitted, achieve a sufficient victory to warrant the offering of peace terms to the enemy. Few at that time anticipated that the war would eventually be fought out until one side had been utterly crushed.

It is noteworthy that next day Kitchener wrote to General Frèch suggesting much the same conviction that an early decision could not be won in the west, and that the Balkans or Italy offered a better prospect of effective operations. Winston Churchill, too, was an Easterner, though as First Lord he wanted a naval or amphibious operation, and proposed a combined assault on the Dardanelles. He won the support of the War Council for his plan against that put forward by the Chancellor, and when Kitchener could not provide troops for a combined operation an attack by the Navy alone on the Dardanelles was sanctioned.

If Lloyd George could not get his strategical plans adopted, he was not gaining much more success in his efforts to increase the supply of munitions. The Cabinet Committee which had been set up on his insistence faded out at the beginning of January, and the attempts of the Board of Trade to mobilize the nation's engineering skill were futile in face of the War Office demand that the Board should confine itself to transferring skilled workers from their own firms to the cluttered and congested armament concerns. Kitchener, one of whose points of pride was the cheapness with which he had fought the Boer War, could not bring himself to plan in terms of the lavish outlay on weapons necessary for European conflict, nor would he drive Von Donop, the inert Master of

Ordnance, into taking a vigorous initiative along unprecedented lines to secure new sources of supply. Lloyd George raised the munitions issue incessantly in the Cabinet, and on 9th March, 1915, introduced a new Defence of the Realm Act (D.O.R.A. the Third) giving the Government extensive powers to control industry in the interests of war production. But when it was proposed to set up a Committee to exercise these powers, Kitchener was induced by Von Donop to insist that the Committee must not interfere in any way with actual or prospective War Office arrangements.

The War Office, for its part, choked its favoured firms with orders which they could not execute; but orders were not shells. Sir John French laid down in December his minimum requirements of artillery ammunition, asking for 50 rounds per gun per day for the 18-pounders, 40 for the 4.5-inch and 25 for the 4.7-inch guns. His actual receipts during the six months from December 1914 to May 1915 averaged less than 8 rounds per gun per day for the 18-pounders, about 6 for the 4.5- and as many for the 4.7-inch guns. The battle of Neuve Chapelle had to be abandoned in futility because there was no more ammunition. Lord Kitchener admitted in the House of Lords on 15th March that orders were not being completed by the promised dates, and that neither the army in the field nor the new troops in training were being properly equipped.

The armament and shipbuilding firms defended themselves by complaining that the workers were slacking and putting in less hours than in peacetime, although overtime and Sunday work were being practised. They blamed this on drink.

It is not easy for the present-day Englishman to realize the prominent place which heavy drinking occupied in the social habits of this country before the First World War. Among an unpleasantly large proportion of the nation frequent drunkenness was habitual. To be "drunk as a lord" was a matter of pride rather than shame. Numbers of workmen got drunk every Saturday night as a matter of course. Undernourished and overcrowded in mean streets and squalid slums, they found their one escape in the tavern, where alcohol gave them, if not happiness, at least a brief oblivion. Far too many of them squandered the bulk of their meagre wages in drink, haunting the pawnshop and gin-palace and leaving their wretched homes stripped and bare, their swarming children ill-clad and half-starved. More money, when they got it, meant more booze.

It is easy to understand, therefore, that, among some members of the working classes, war-work, bringing regular pay packets swelled by overtime rates, meant more frequent visits to the public-houses, which used to be open all day. Many of them drank on their way to work in the morning, drank during the day and again in the evenings, and as drink

was both cheap and strong, they were perpetually half-fuddled. Some of the employing classes, it should in fairness be added, were no better. But whatever their personal habits, the employers grew dismayed at the delays and hold-ups which drink was causing in urgent war production, and began to appeal for something to be done about it.

The appeal found a ready response from Lloyd George. He had been reared in the strictest doctrine of the blue riband, and if no longer a strict teetotaler, he was personally abstemious and a strong advocate of sobriety. He had always been appalled by the social wreckage resulting from excessive drinking. Now there was added the further damning charge that alcohol was checking munition production and threatening to make Britain lose the war. He proceeded to declare administrative war on Drink.

He fired his first shot in the War Budget of November 1914, when he raised the beer tax from 7s. 9d. to 25s. per standard barrel. By the following February the reports from munition areas were growing so alarming that he realized far more drastic measures would be necessary. In a speech at Bangor he declared that drink was doing more damage in the war than all the German submarines put together, and that the Government would use its powers to check the evil. Recognizing the political difficulty of severely curtailing the drink trade and destroying its profits while it remained in private hands, he started to investigate the possibility of State purchase of the liquor traffic, and got Sir William Plender to make a valuation of the properties—breweries and public-houses—which would have to be acquired.

On 29th March a deputation from the Shipbuilding Employers' Federation waited on Lloyd George to protest against the alarming growth of drinking among their workers and the serious delays to construction and repair of warships it was causing. In his reply, Lloyd George said:

"I had the privilege of an audience with His Majesty this morning, and I am permitted to say by him that he is very deeply concerned on this question. . . ."

This was no more than the truth. King George had been so distressed at the account given him by the Chancellor of the inroads strong drink was making on the national war effort that he took very seriously Lloyd George's suggestion that he might give the country a lead in the matter. On 30th March he wrote to L.G. offering to abstain from all alcoholic liquor till the war was over and abolish it from the Royal Household.

This promise of personal abstinence became known as the "King's

A talk with Lord  
Cunliffe, Governor  
of the Bank of  
England, August,  
1914





[Photograph by "L'Illustration"]

A War Conference in Paris, August, 1916

Pledge", and it was followed by some, but not a high, proportion of the nation. Indeed, when Lloyd George first showed the letter to Asquith the Prime Minister was far from sympathetic and advised against its publication. He strongly disliked the policy of total prohibition toward which it seemed to point. He himself was no ascetic. But he was somewhat reassured when L.G. told him that even under prohibition one could get alcohol on a doctor's prescription. "There will be any amount of doctor's certificates!" Asquith declared. Thereupon he became more reconciled to the situation, and when the King authorized publication of his letter, subject to the Prime Minister's permission, Asquith agreed to its issue to the Press.

Lloyd George failed, however, to carry through his plan for buying up the liquor traffic. The difficulty was not that of finance. The price at which all the breweries and public-houses in the Kingdom could then have been acquired was estimated at £250 million, at which figure they would in years to come have proved an extremely remunerative national investment. Nor was it the brewers themselves, many of whom would have been rather glad to be bought out. The Tory leaders, too, would have agreed to the step in view of the national emergency. But the extreme teetotallers held that it would be sinful for the State to become the purveyor of intoxicants, and their influence within the Liberal Party was so strong that the project had to be abandoned, and Lloyd George turned to other devices, such as cutting down the hours when public-houses could be open, watering down the beer and spirits, prohibiting treating and placing munition areas under a Board of Liquor Control.

He could not, however, get satisfactory progress in the output of munitions. Kitchener doggedly insisted on keeping their control in the hands of the War Office, though he admitted to the Cabinet on 5th April that he ought, months ago, to have taken L.G.'s advice about commandeering the factories. "But I am a foreigner in England," he pleaded in excuse. "I do not understand the Englishman or his ways!"

Lloyd George's concern with such matters as munition production, liquor control, the planning of strategy and of diplomatic initiatives in Italy, Greece and Roumania no doubt carried him outside his official sphere as Chancellor of the Exchequer. But from the moment that Britain entered the conflict he knew one purpose and only one—the winning of the war; and to this he devoted the full force of his fertile mind and boundless energy. This made him a most uncomfortable colleague to certain of his fellow-Ministers. With their Liberal tradition of "Peace, Retrenchment and Reform!"—the Gladstonian watchwords of the Party—most of them were definitely unwarlike in temperament, and hated having to direct their energies to war-making as a teetotaller

would hate having to run a tavern. Their hearts were not in the job. It was, they felt, a most unseemly business for high-minded people; and they considered it positively disgraceful of Lloyd George to fling himself with such gusto into the work of organizing the manufacture of munitions or to plot deadly blows upon the enemy.

The alarm felt at Lloyd George's jingoism is evinced by a letter written to him as early as 18th February, 1915 by a prominent Welshman, the Rev. Thomas Phillips of the Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church:

"Like the rest of the public I am in the dark, but perhaps you will permit a benighted man to remember two facts.

"The war is not going to last for ever and I cherish the hope that your best service is to come when the war is over. You know I have always wanted to see you at the head of a great Christian democracy, and frankly I am anxious. I do not want to see the Prime Minister of Brotherhood killed by the Minister of Munitions.

"The second fact is that the *British Weekly*, in spite of the worth and brilliance of its editor, does not represent Nonconformity on the war. Most ministers I have met under 40 are greatly perturbed. . . . They all say with a strange intensity, 'The thing is not Christian.' . . ."

But while orthodox Liberals were becoming increasingly alienated from L.G., the public outside their ranks saw in him the most active and efficient of their leaders for the struggle, and the heads of the Conservative Party constantly sought him out. This roused the suspicions of his fellow-ministers. Was he plotting treachery against them? Aiming to oust the Prime Minister? By the end of March acute discontent was being voiced at the feebleness of the Government and at Asquith's lethargy and failure to press ahead the Dardanelles venture. Tory papers voiced this criticism, and the *Daily Chronicle*, egged on by one of the more suspicious members of the Cabinet, came out with a tale of a conspiracy to overthrow the Premier and put Lloyd George and Balfour in charge. The calumny infuriated L.G., who hastened to see Asquith and found him in tears, for the jealous colleague—McKenna—had been pouring poison into his ears about the Chancellor. Lloyd George succeeded in reassuring him as to his loyalty, and in Asquith's presence he severely rebuked the mischief-maker.

During the next few weeks, however, things went from bad to worse. Between early April and mid-May the War Council was not once convened. Asquith was preoccupied by private worries, and could not be induced to take decisions about the Dardanelles venture, which in consequence suffered a delay destined to prove fatal. Appeals for more shells poured in from the Army in France, but were unheeded. Letters to

the Press from the front were blacked out by the censor. After the battle of Festubert had ended in costly failure through lack of artillery support, Sir John French sent emissaries to lay the facts before Lloyd George, Balfour and Bonar Law. They also talked to Col. Repington, *The Times* Military Correspondent, who published in that paper a sensational report, blaming the defeat on the shell shortage.

This shell scandal played an important part in bringing about the fall of the Liberal administration; but even more fatal to it was the resignation on 15th May of Lord Fisher, the First Sea Lord, who had quarrelled with Churchill over the Dardanelles campaign. Fisher, always imperious, sat tight at the Admiralty, sent an ultimatum to Asquith demanding absolute powers over naval matters, and dropped an anonymous note to Bonar Law to tell of his resignation. The Tory leader had hitherto given non-party support to the Government. But he now told Lloyd George that this upset, coming on top of the shell shortage, made it impossible for him to hold his party longer in such quiescence.

Bonar Law, Balfour and Carson consulted with Lloyd George, proposing a coalition. Bonar Law offered L.G. the Prime Ministership—an indication how far the Tories had moved from their old hatred of him—but L.G. firmly refused to supplant his chief, for whom he had a warm regard and that tenacious loyalty of the Celt, which, once given, is not easily withdrawn. Instead, he went to see Asquith, told him about the Tory approaches, and found him very willing to agree to a Coalition.

It was arranged that Bonar Law should write to the Prime Minister a letter setting out his changed attitude. This letter was sent on 17th May, and was followed by negotiations and Cabinet discussions which resulted in an agreement between the leaders of the Government and Opposition to set up a Coalition. On 19th May Asquith announced in the House that these arrangements were being made. The names of the new Cabinet were published a week later. To the immense delight of the nation it was found that Lloyd George had been given charge of a new office—the Ministry of Munitions.

## CHAPTER XIV

### MINISTER OF MUNITIONS

IF proof were needed of the fact that Lloyd George's activities during the early months of the war had been wholly inspired by his passion to secure victory for his country, and not by any mere lust for personal advancement, such proof was furnished most emphatically by the post he took in the new Administration.

He had been Chancellor of the Exchequer—second only to the Prime Minister, and heir-apparent to the Premiership. He could have stayed in that post with universal goodwill. But instead of doing so he handed over his high office to McKenna, the very man whose jealousy and suspicion of him had recently caused so painful a scene with Asquith, and taking his political life in his hands, went forth to create, as his contribution to his country's need, the as yet non-existent Ministry of Munitions—a Ministry that had neither premises nor staff nor defined authority.

It was his own doing. On 19th May he had written at length to the Prime Minister, urging the need to mobilize the nation's engineering resources and the importance of putting a Minister in charge of the task. There was no other possible candidate for the post, and when Asquith offered it to him he felt that he must take it, whatever the personal cost.

His old uncle, Richard Lloyd, who had followed his career with loving pride, and corresponded almost daily with him, sending messages of praise and counsel, was deeply distressed at this risky move, and begged him not to desert the Exchequer. It was, in all truth, in its defiance of personal interests and selfish ambition, as sacrificial and self-denying an act as had been Lloyd George's opposition to the Boer War; though unlike that earlier heroism, it elicited national applause rather than execration. Asquith sought to cushion the hard seat his lieutenant had chosen by giving it to be understood that he was only temporarily leaving the Exchequer to organize the new Ministry. But that suggestion probably did L.G. more harm than good, for McKenna naturally could not relish the idea of having presently to give up his good job, and his bitter feelings for his colleague were intensified.

During the preliminary discussions the idea had been mooted that Lloyd George should carry out the work of organizing munition production as Secretary of State for War, either holding that post jointly with Kitchener or sending Kitchener out to be Commander-in-Chief. But the elderly Field-Marshal was opposed to either arrangement, and

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the veneration in which he was still held by the public made it impolitic to think of retiring him, though his colleagues were coming to realize that his tenure of the War Office was a misfortune. So Lloyd George chose to create an independent Ministry, bargaining only to be given a free hand, untrammelled by the archaic habits and standards of the Ordnance Department.

In his *War Memoirs* he has given a description of how he started in an empty house with two tables and a chair, which the Office of Works tried to remove; and no staff except his two secretaries, J. T. Davies and Miss Frances Stevenson, both of whom accompanied him from the Treasury. He had built many structures in his time, since that far-off day when as a young fellow of twenty-one he erected for himself a brand-new solicitor's practice at Crickieth. There were, for examples such creations as the Road Board, the National Insurance System, the Development Commission, the Medical Research Organization, to name just a few. Now he had to build up from the bare boards an unprecedented Ministry which should take under its control the whole field of the nation's industry and remodel it for the task of equipping the country's forces for victory on land and sea and in the air.

There were, fortunately, certain working parties already in existence, mainly as a result of Lloyd George's previous efforts, which could be called on to help his initial efforts. Toward the end of March he had induced the War Council to ordain the immediate setting up of a Munitions of War Committee to secure the application of the nation's resources to the work of supplying the needs of the Army and Navy, and by 12th April this Committee had actually been appointed, with Humbert Wolfe, the poet, then an official of the Board of Trade, as its secretary. Sir H. Llewellyn Smith of the Board of Trade and Sir Percy Girouard, representing the armament firms, were among the members of this Committee. Stirred by this move, which the War Office eyed askance, and influenced by Lloyd George's demand that men of "push and go" should be sought out and given the job of organizing industrial activity, Kitchener had also set up an Armaments Output Committee, with the industrialist, Mr. G. M. Booth, as its secretary, to secure labour for the established armament firms. These two Committees and their officers were now available for helping the new Ministry in its tasks.

Lloyd George was not long in expanding this minute cadre of helpers. He collected some Civil Servants from other departments, whose heads recognized the immense importance of the job he had taken on, and lent him men from their staffs on something more generous than the familiar principle of seconding those whose departure would be welcomed. The most notable of these was William Beveridge. From the University of London he acquired the economist, Walter Layton. Both of these

men now enrich the House of Lords with their outstanding qualities. But the bulk of his leading helpers he drew from industrial and commercial sources, reaching out right and left for the ablest business brains and organizers in the country. His method and his principle are illustrated by a letter he wrote on 8th June, 1915, to the coal-owning South Wales millionaire and his former rival in the Welsh Liberal movement, D. A. Thomas (later Lord Rhondda):

"I want your assistance in the new office. There are two services you can render me.

"(1) I am forming an Advisory Committee of business men who will sit with three or four members of the Cabinet for consultation on questions of policy. Will you accept a nomination on that Committee?

"(2) Will you place at my disposal the services of your Manager, Mr. Llewellyn? I am very anxious not to have my plans strangled by officialdom; for that purpose I am trying to gather around me a staff of good business men who will sit here in the office and undertake the direction of some special branch of the work. I know how difficult it is for you to spare Llewellyn, but I should deem it a very great favour if you can let me have his assistance for at least a few months. . . ."

He got Llewellyn. He got also a galaxy of the ablest talent in the country; men like Sir Eric Geddes, Sir John Hunter, Sir Ernest Moir, Sir Arthur Duckham, Seeborn Rowntree, Lord Moulton and a host of others whose names are outstanding, not only in their own branches of industry or science, but in the annals of the nation. For his Parliamentary Secretary he chose Dr. Addison (now Lord Addison), who had given him such magnificent help in organizing the medical profession in support of his Insurance Scheme. Then, as always, Lloyd George tried to surround himself with the ablest men he could find. He had none of that petty spirit which fears to exalt first-class men lest they should develop into rivals. On the contrary, he held that his own capacity would be heightened by the support and stimulus of their quality. The truth was, no doubt, that he was far too big a man to be afraid of being overshadowed by his associates. He had, too, a genuine admiration for brains, learning, and competent experts, and a dislike of the dull, the bungler and the second-rate. He did not gladly suffer fools.

With his novel and remarkable staff, Lloyd George set to work to reorganize the engineering capacity of Britain for war production. It was a gigantic task, the like of which had never before been attempted or even conceived. It was all the harder because the new Minister found

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it extremely difficult to extract from the War Office any definite information as to their probable requirements of arms and equipment. This was not altogether surprising, because the War Office itself had made no full survey of its needs, and indeed was deplorably inadequate in its notions of the types and quantities of artillery, shells, machine-guns and other weapons which our troops would require. The orders it had placed fell lamentably short of the Army's real needs, and as these orders were confined to a small list of firms already overloaded, the deliveries of even these inadequate munitions were falling hopelessly behind schedule. Lloyd George and his helpers discovered that there were not in the country enough machine tools for making the arms needed, and that the War Office had done nothing towards remedying this shortage. There was not one-tenth of the factory capacity requisite for filling shells to maintain ammunition supply, and the stock of ingredients for explosives of types approved by the War Office was swiftly running out, so that new explosive materials would have to be invented and—what was much harder—the War Office acceptance of their use secured.

It was obvious to Lloyd George that a swift expansion of munition output, utilizing every available factory in the kingdom, could not be organized from Whitehall. No sooner was he in the saddle than he made a tour of the principal manufacturing centres, holding meetings of employers and workers, whipping up their enthusiasm for the tasks confronting the nation and setting them to form local committees to overhaul their local production capacity and plan their contribution to the war effort. His eloquence was electrifying, and masters and men were roused to make an entirely new approach to the work. Manufacturers readily set about the conversion of their factories to unfamiliar production jobs, and employees were induced to consider with less antagonism the setting aside of their established trade union restrictions.

This last matter was a very serious difficulty. The existing supply of skilled engineers was quite inadequate to man the expanded munition factories, so it was essential to get the men's consent to "dilution"—the use of scantily trained hands under the supervision of those who already knew the job. This was a breach in the carefully built up and jealously guarded rules of the engineering industry and the privileged position of its craftsmen. Probably no one except Lloyd George, with his winning tongue and his well-established record as the friend and ally of the working man, could have carried through that dilution scheme without throwing the whole country into chaos and provoking widespread strikes.

If it was hard to get the engineers to accept male dilutees, it was far harder to persuade them to allow women to undertake types of work which had hitherto been sacred to men only. In the spring of 1915 the

Board of Trade had enrolled a large number of women volunteers for war work, but fewer than  $2\frac{1}{2}\%$  of them had actually been taken on. When the Ministry of Munitions was formed the erstwhile leaders of the militant suffragettes came forward to recruit women volunteers, and Lloyd George managed to secure entrance for these unfamiliar figures at bench and lathe in the engineering works. By July 1916 their number had risen to 340,844, and Lloyd George stipulated that on piece-work they should be paid the same rate for the job as men. Thereby he incidentally effected a revolution in women's pay rates, which never thereafter sank back to the sweated labour level at which they had stood before 1914.

Lloyd George had always been a tirelessly active worker, but in the early months of the new Ministry he worked with an intensity which few men can ever have rivalled. Every moment was crammed with effort, with the swift handling of men, the solving of problems, the planning of new developments. He would by breakfast-time have done a couple of hours' work, and at breakfast he would have visitors or colleagues with whom he could discuss urgent matters. All through his official career, but perhaps most of all during the war years, his breakfast table was a habitual occasion for conference, at which sleepy-eyed colleagues and distinguished visitors would find him devastatingly wide awake and mentally active. By nine o'clock he was in his office, studying the latest production reports, dealing with any hitch or delay that threatened. Every week he held a meeting of the heads of his departments, each of whom had been put in charge of some particular branch of production. At these meetings their weekly progress reports were examined, deficiencies pointed out, explanations sought and remedies devised. Thereby any defect of co-ordination between two stages of a chain of production could be promptly investigated and removed. Withal, he was extremely approachable, and always managed to find time to discuss a problem with any of his staff, and to see any manufacturers who were anxious to help or were in trouble over their instructions. It is curious how often really busy men appear able to be accessible to subordinates and even to strangers, while others who do not achieve a tithe as much are always too busy to see anyone.

The tale of the Ministry of Munitions' achievements under Lloyd George's inspiration is too long to repeat here. It is set out in the Official History of the Ministry, and is summarized in Lloyd George's *War Memoirs*. It is engraved, too, in the memories of the troops who were serving at the Front in the First World War, and saw their supplies of guns and ammunition steadily mount as the National Shell Factories, the National Filling Factories, Projectile Factories and Ordnance Factories which he had started got to work; as the lavish supplies of machine-guns

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which Lloyd George ordered (in defiance of Kitchener's ukase that four per battalion was ample) streamed out to multiply a hundredfold the fire-power of the infantry. Apologists for the War Office have pleaded in its defence that these new factories contributed little until the summer of 1916, and that until then the Army relied mainly on supplies which the War Office had ordered. But many of those orders were placed only as a result of Lloyd George's pressure, and the goods, though ordered, would never have been forthcoming but for the steps he took to secure labour and to reorganize the nation's industrial capacity—a reorganization which the War Office, if left to itself, would never have attempted to carry out. Nor would the War Office have dreamed of placing the orders for heavy artillery and machine-guns which L.G. issued in defiance of its advice, or for the Stokes mortars which it repeatedly refused to adopt but which Lloyd George produced and the Army eagerly welcomed.

Not only did the War Office fail to plan supplies on a scale approaching what proved to be the needs of the Army; it actively opposed Lloyd George's efforts to furnish an output on that scale. After a conference which he held in June 1915 at Boulogne with M. Albert Thomas, the French Minister responsible for Munitions, and the British and French artillery experts, Lloyd George decided to order big guns on a scale far exceeding the War Office instructions. Kitchener, primed by his advisers, fought back right up to the Cabinet in an effort to get the production of this artillery stopped; and only L.G.'s dogged defiance prevented the War Office from securing the cancellation of the orders. In the event, the guns not only proved necessary but had to be greatly increased in number to meet the clamorous demands of the military commanders.

Such illustrations could be multiplied all too often; but indeed the case is beyond any argument. All Britain knew at the time, and the grateful memory will survive while any of those who fought at the Front or worked to supply them are still living, how Lloyd George transfigured the whole scene of munition supply. Figures could be quoted to show how shell output rose during the first year of the Ministry by 1,000%, how new sources of explosives were discovered and, after a bitter struggle with the War Office, the control of design and invention was wrested from it so that new and improved patterns of weapons could be devised and produced, culminating most spectacularly in the tank. Winston Churchill deserves the credit for initiating at the Admiralty the experiments that ultimately yielded this weapon, which was to revolutionize field warfare, the War Office having looked at and thrust aside a similar suggestion by General Swinton. But it was Lloyd George who, after Winston had been driven from the Admiralty by the Tories when they joined the Coalition, took over the experiments and

carried them forward until, in February 1916, the Mother of all tanks, H.M.S. *Centipede*, lumbered irresistibly across all obstacles in a demonstration at Hatfield Park.

Although Lloyd George was working incredibly hard at his task of producing and multiplying the weapons of war, his restless spirit could not be confined to that interest alone. Internal affairs and the conduct of the war also engaged his attention.

Some of the issues to which he devoted his care were related to the munition problem. Thus he spent much thought on developing welfare services for his munition workers, and thereby gave a fillip to a movement which until then had been very limited in its scope. The old-fashioned factory often had the most primitive and scanty sanitary equipment, and was innocent of canteens, rest-rooms, cloakrooms, clean drinking water, to say nothing of drying-rooms for wet clothes, welfare supervisors, first-aid workers or recreation facilities. Lloyd George set up a Health of Munition Workers' Committee in September 1915, to secure such amenities in the works and factories under his control, and shortly afterwards got Seeborn Rowntree to become Director of the Welfare section of the Ministry. From this work there later developed the Industrial Fatigue Research Committee.

A somewhat parallel creation was the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, which sprang up as the result of an Order in Council in June 1915, and received its first Charter in November 1916. It may be pointed out that the three great research bodies of the Privy Council, the Development Commission which promotes agricultural research, the Medical Research Council, and the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, all owe their origin to Lloyd George. He had no patience with rule-of-thumb methods, and constantly sought to get problems studied by the ablest experts that could be found. He had the Celt's esteem for education, in sharp contrast to the traditional English distrust of "those clever people".

His efforts to secure labour for munition work led him to give renewed support to the call for conscription. It has already been noted that in 1910 he was advocating universal national training for defence. To his intense patriotism it was axiomatic that men should be ready to come to the defence of their native land. Now, when Britain was fighting for her life, it seemed to him obvious that her manhood must be called on to serve her, either on the battlefield or in the no less vital task of forging the tools of victory. On 18th August, 1915, he told the War Policy Cabinet Committee that he was definitely in favour of compulsory service. He would approve, indeed, of making it universal and enrolling everyone in a system of service, whether this was to be rendered with the Forces or on the home front.

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"If you ask me whether personally I think it would help the efficient conduct of the war I say at once that it certainly would. I would say that every man and woman was bound to render the services that the State required of them, and which in the opinion of the State they could best render. I do not believe you will go through this war without doing it in the end; in fact, I am perfectly certain you will have to come to it."

He qualified this by claiming that he held at least that there must be compulsion for military service. We could not keep up our armies without it. But if everyone of military age was liable to serve in the Army, it would also be easier to fill the ranks of the munition workers, as the alternative to doing steady work of national importance would be service with the Forces.

The Cabinet were not then ready to take this fence. In October, Kitchener proposed that voluntary recruiting should be supplemented by local conscription by ballot in all districts failing to provide a sufficient quota of volunteers. This was rejected by the Cabinet in favour of the Derby Scheme, a canvass of all men of military age, to secure their promise to come if called up. Married men were promised that they would be left until all single men had been drawn into the Forces.

The Derby Scheme proved to be a stepping-stone to conscription, for under the protection of this guarantee the married men attested. The single men mostly did not. But the authorities clearly could not call up the attested married men, leaving the bulk of the single men at home, so a first measure of conscription appeared in a Bill to compel all single men to attest. Its Second Reading was carried on 12th January, 1916, by 433 to 41, its opponents being chiefly a small band of Liberals headed by two Cabinet Ministers—Runciman and Simon. Sir John Simon, indeed, carried his opposition to the point of resigning from the Government, mistakenly thinking that the country would be with him in opposing conscription. But the country was with Lloyd George, a fact which added new bitterness to the growing dislike of him among the more peevish Liberals. The majority of the Labour Party supported the Bill, but Ramsay MacDonald, Philip Snowden and J. H. Thomas headed a small Labour opposition group. Curiously they were the same three who fifteen years later would abandon the Labour Party to join with the Tories in a National Government.

This initial measure was completed in May by a further Bill imposing general and immediate compulsory military service. Lloyd George piloted it through its Second Reading, and Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, sent him a congratulatory note declaring: "The Empire's thanks are due to you—alone!" It was generally recog-

nized, indeed, that the pressing through of conscription was the work of Lloyd George.

The transformation of Britain into a vast munitions factory and all the related tasks which grew out of this—control of liquor, manipulation of labour, industrial welfare, conscription—would have been more than enough to preoccupy most men. But they could not exhaust the energy and interest of so superbly vital and active a being as Lloyd George. He also studied with alert and critical interest the course of the war and struggled hard, though unavailingly, to get the Cabinet to take timely measures for its successful prosecution. All through 1915 he was urging action in the Balkans to strengthen Serbia against the assault of the Central Powers which he foresaw would fall upon her. The action was not taken.

Kitchener, whom the country still looked on as an infallible military genius, had become a vast stone idol. Despite occasional flashes of clear vision he was immobile and ineffectual, unable to cope with the multiple tasks of his office and equally unable to delegate them to deputies. Behind a mask of secrecy he concealed disastrous inaction. On the strength of cryptic assurances from him, Sir Edward Grey announced in September the readiness of Britain to give Serbia every support if she were attacked; but in fact Kitchener took no action to prepare such support. When in October the Germans crossed the Danube to advance on Serbia a telegram brought the news to the War Office, but Kitchener was too inert to read it, and told the Cabinet he had no information of any German assault. He was utterly unready with help or plans for help to the Serbs, who were crushed under a combined attack of Germans and Bulgarians. All we did was to abandon our now hopeless position on the Dardenelles peninsula and move some of the troops to Salonika, where they were left with neither guns, ammunition nor transport for any offensive operations in the Balkans.

Furious at the betrayal of Serbia, Sir Edward Carson resigned his post as Attorney General on 18th October, 1915. Lloyd George very nearly followed his example. Indeed, he offered his resignation to Asquith, who refused to accept it, but agreed instead to set up a small Cabinet Committee to deal with the conduct of the war. The device came to nothing, however, as for all important matters Asquith brought in the whole Cabinet, and decisions were always postponed if there were differences of opinion on the course to be followed.

Lloyd George openly indicated his dissatisfaction with the way things were going when he was reporting the achievements of his Ministry to the House on 20th December, 1915. He urged the need for yet greater output. "What we stint in materials we squander in life; that is the one great lesson of munitions." He pleaded with labour to co-operate by

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accepting more unskilled and women workers, and urged that this would make the difference between early victory and long-drawn-out bloodshed. He added:

"I wonder whether it will not be too late. Ah, fatal words on this occasion! Too late in moving here, too late in arriving there, too late in coming to this decision, too late in starting with enterprises, too late in preparing! In this war the footsteps of the Allied forces have been dogged by the mocking spectre of 'too late', and unless we quicken our movements, damnation will fall on the sacred cause for which so much gallant blood has flowed."

His hearers were well aware that this passage was addressed, not primarily to munition workers, but to more distinguished loiterers. The more unwarlike of the Liberal Ministers, Simon, Runciman, McKenna, Buckmaster and their allies knew themselves guilty of the dalliance and indecision which he was castigating, but impenitently chose to construe his attack as evidence that he sought to oust Asquith. For months past he had shown his restiveness, and had talked of resigning and starting a ginger campaign to insist on more vigorous and intelligent prosecution of the war, but had been dissuaded by his friends, who felt he could do more good in the Government than outside. He was also unwilling to appear disloyal to Asquith, for whom he had a deep regard.

But some of his Liberal colleagues, incapable of thinking that others were not moved by the same self-regarding motives that actuated themselves, took it for granted that L.G.'s restlessness could have no other aim than self-advancement, and that he was intriguing to seize power. No doubt he felt that he could make a better job of things if he had the power, but the motive that drove him was not the glitter of the Premiership, but his passion to save his country from disaster. He was the same man who in 1910 had offered to resign office and sacrifice his political future if thereby a coalition could be arranged which would secure the carrying out of the reform programme on which his heart was set. Students of Lloyd George's career will never understand it unless they see in him a man who was insatiably eager to get certain things done, and was far more concerned with those practical objectives than with his personal advancement. He might often be the best man—at times the only man—who could carry through those purposes, and he grasped office and power as a means to the end. But office and power were not for him the goal of achievement; they were only the doors to opportunity.

His suspicious colleagues imputed less worthy motives to him. Besides, they detested his shameless zeal for the war, and his successful

campaign for conscription intensified their bitter antipathy. Their whispering campaign against him buzzed through the National Liberal Club and spread out among those in the country who shared their attitude.

How Lloyd George himself felt about this mischief-making is shown by a letter he wrote to Sir Edward Russell, the proprietor of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, on 28th April, 1916, referring to an article which Russell had written about these attacks:

"... These attacks on me have gone much further than you imagine. They have been sedulously spread for months and months... so that I find that whatever influence I might possess for directing the war along its proper course is being seriously undermined by the suggestion that all I recommend is prompted, not by patriotic reasons, but by a greedy desire to supplant my chief.

"You say in your article that no one will believe it. It is difficult for high-minded men to credit the gullibility of the average mind, and the readiness with which it assimilates base imputations. . . . Unfortunately, as long as these notions about my being moved by personal ambition are allowed to gain currency without check, my warnings will be unheeded. I must therefore deal with them at once. . . ."

Accordingly, on 6th May, Lloyd George went to Conway to speak to his constituents, and after defending his attitude to conscription he dealt with the two charges that were being bandied about against him: that he had differences with Asquith; and that he was throwing too much fervour into the prosecution of the war.

The first charge he answered in these terms:

"I have worked with Mr. Asquith for ten years. I have served under him for eight. If we had not worked harmoniously—and we have—let me tell you here at once it would have been my fault and not his. I never worked with anyone who could be more considerate, and I disdain the things they have said. But we have had our differences? Good Heavens! What use would I have been if I had not differed? . . . Freedom of speech is essential in everything, but there is one place where it is vital, and that is in the Council Chamber. The councilor who professes to agree with everything that falls from his leader has betrayed him. . . ."

As for the second charge, he declared that he hated war :

"But you either make war or you don't. It is the business of statesmen to strain every nerve to keep a nation out of war, but once they are in it, it is their business to wage it with all their might."

A recent article in the *Daily News* by its then editor, A. G. Gardiner, had put into print the criticisms and suspicions of L.G.'s enemies, and this enabled him to deal with them in his speech. About this article he said:

"I have been subjected to a cloudy discharge of poison gas, and I am glad that it has been done. These things have been going on clandestinely and surreptitiously for months, and I could not deal with them. My difficulty was that no self-respecting man or newspaper could be found to give publicity to these attacks, and therefore I could not answer them. I am not surprised. We, after all, are a country that has produced millions of fighters, but we very rarely in history produced an assassin. They have found one at last, and I am glad of it. . . . If any man believes that I am capable amid such terrible surroundings of making use of them for a base and treacherous intrigue to advance my private ends, let him believe it. I seek neither his friendship nor his support. I reserve my sympathy for those who get either, and my disdain for those who merit it."

This countercheck quarrelsome did little to close the gap between him and his Liberal colleagues, whose persistence in anticipating and trying to provoke a breach between L.G. and Asquith was before long to lead on to a *dénouement* which they would find as distasteful as it was unexpected.

Twined with the thread of Lloyd George's political progress was another—the thread of Ireland. His support of Michael Davitt, the veteran Home Ruler, had brought him the first public advice to seek a parliamentary career. It was the support of the Irish Party which enabled him to carry his People's Budget and his Insurance Bill. Later, the trouble with Ulster wrecked his Land Campaign. Now a fresh tragedy arose in Ireland which, while it was ultimately to bring on him problems and difficulties, in the handling of which he would make some of his gravest blunders, had for the moment the redeeming feature that it saved his life, and thus enabled him to save Britain and the world from the disaster of a Prussian victory.

It has been noted that at the beginning of the war Redmond pledged the full support of Southern Ireland to the Empire's defence. But mis-handling of the Irish by military and civil authorities drove large numbers of them away from Redmond and his Home Rule movement into the

arms of the extreme Irish Republican agitators, who regarded England as the supreme enemy and intrigued with Germany with the object of using the war emergency as an opportunity for breaking off the English yoke. A rising was planned for Easter 1916, to be carried out with the aid of German arms and ammunition which would be brought by a cargo boat and a submarine. But the Government got wind of the plot. The ship was sunk and Sir Roger Casement, who had come over from Germany to head the rebellion, was captured. The plotters called off the rebellion, but too late to stop some hundreds of the Irish volunteers from carrying out their march on Dublin. The rising was suppressed in five days of bitter and ruthless fighting; and Asquith, after visiting Ireland to study the situation, entrusted Lloyd George with the task of trying to negotiate a solution of the trouble. L.G. succeeded in framing a proposed settlement which was accepted by both the Ulstermen and the Nationalists, but it was torpedoed by the English Tories and Ireland drifted on toward fiercer strife.

Now it so happened that the news at this time from Russia about the shortage of munitions was so serious that L.G. was planning to visit that country with Kitchener to see what could be done to help them. The Easter rebellion upset this arrangement, and Kitchener had to go alone. He sailed on 5th June, 1916, in H.M.S. *Hampshire*, in very stormy weather. Late in the evening the vessel struck a German mine off the Orkneys, and sank in a few minutes. Kitchener was drowned. But for the Irish trouble, Lloyd George would have shared his fate.

The loss of Lord Kitchener left the War Office vacant, and Asquith offered the post to Lloyd George. He was indeed the only possible choice for it, but the office had little attraction for him. On account of Kitchener's growing immobility and indecision, most of his powers had been transferred to General Sir William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. Robertson had no intention of handing back those powers to a civilian, and Lloyd George did not want to become a mere rubber stamp for the decisions of the military chiefs. He was growing more and more dissatisfied with their strategy and with the course of the war. If he refused the office and resigned he would bring about the fall of the Government, and an administration more homogeneous and more purposeful in its war policy might emerge; whereas, if he took the office, his action would establish more firmly the existing regime with all its inner antagonisms and its Ministerial dead wood.

For nearly three weeks he hesitated, discussing the issue with his more intimate friends and with those colleagues whom he could trust—and these did not include his Liberal associates, who were eyeing him askance with a nervous suspicion verging on hatred. But if he was impatient with them, he was strongly loyal to Asquith, and in the end that loyalty



*(Photograph by London News Agency)*

Inspecting a German dug-out with M. Albert Thomas, September, 1916



*[Photograph by Vandyk]*

The Prime Minister, 1917

won the day and he decided to accept the War Office. He urged that Churchill should succeed him at the Ministry of Munitions, but Asquith, who had developed a profound dislike of that brilliant young man, refused to consider the suggestion, and gave the post to Edwin S. Montagu.

The next six months were for Lloyd George a dismal period of frustration and of growing alarm and indignation at the course which events were being allowed to take. At the War Office, with the truncated powers which in Kitchener's later days had been left to the Secretary of State, he could gain no controlling voice over strategy, and had to look on impotently while the military chiefs were flinging into futile slaughter on the Somme the flower of the Kitchener armies, wherein were very many of the finest and most brilliant young men of Britain—the men who should have provided her with leadership in the coming years. Our casualties in those bloody battles totalled over six hundred thousand. The meagre advances of a few hundred yards here and there along the unbroken German front which were gained at this heavy cost were of no major significance. The first tanks were flung into the battle and their secret thus given away, against L.G.'s wishes, though they were as yet too few to make any decisive contribution.

Some things Lloyd George was able to do. He took immediate steps to clear up the appalling muddle and tragedy of the Mesopotamia expedition. He also, by means of that adroit psychological handling of which he was a master, succeeded in inducing Haig to appoint Eric Geddes to reorganize the confused and utterly inefficient military transport system behind the British front in France and Flanders. He himself frequently visited the front to confer with the commanders of the Allied forces, and held discussions with the French statesmen. But little of practical value resulted from these talks. He had also to witness the tragedy of Roumania being encouraged to enter the war on the Allied side when we were completely unprepared to give her any support. She was swiftly overrun by the enemy and forced to surrender, and her rich oil-wells and cornfields became a spoil which undid all the effect of the strict blockade that we had imposed on the Central Powers.

As the autumn drew on the failure of our military efforts and the futility of our strategy of attrition, the growing weakness of Russia and the swift dwindling of our food supplies as a result of the German submarine warfare, all combined to present a hopeless picture in which nothing gave any promise that we were advancing toward victory.

To some, this dark outlook suggested that it was time to call off the war. In both Britain and France there began to be talk of peace terms, and it was rumoured that President Wilson might intervene to summon the combatants to a peace conference. In France, M. Briand repudiated any thought of a compromise peace in a speech to the French Chamber on

19th September, 1916, which was acclaimed as one of the finest he had ever delivered. Lloyd George decided that a similar resolute note should be struck here, and on 28th September he gave an interview to Roy Howard of the United Press of America in which he asserted the British determination to carry the fight to a decisive finish. The "Knock-out Blow" declaration, as the American papers headlined it, was gladly acclaimed by the nation, but it distressed a section of the Cabinet, and Grey wrote to L.G. about it in tones of pained remonstrance.

In mid-November Lord Lansdowne was moved by the sombre outlook to submit to the Cabinet a memorandum suggesting that peace negotiations should be opened. The proposal was rejected, but the facts to which he had drawn attention remained—the heaviness of our casualty lists, the failure of Allied offensives in the west, the weakening of Italy, the crumbling of Russia. The tale of sinking of our ships by German U-boats continued to mount swiftly, while the Admiralty could think of no effective counter-measures.

The Cabinet discussed interminably but decided little. Its very strength was a source of weakness, for it was an assembly of able and powerful but incompatible personalities, mutually suspicious, always on their guard against giving way to the other side. And Asquith did not attempt to drive them. He was content if he could keep the peace between them, and this meant leaving any controversial issues unsettled, even when their settlement was vital.

Asquith was a man of high honour, of commanding intellect, balanced judgment, and masterful platform oratory. But he had the not uncommon lawyer's weakness of valuing words rather than actions, and mistaking a verdict for a victory. A speech that won a majority vote in the House of Commons had no effect on the German front line. Patching over a threatened schism in the Cabinet did not sink German submarines or reorganize the Air Force.

On 15th and 16th November, 1916, Asquith and Lloyd George, accompanied by Sir Maurice Hankey, attended an Inter-Allied Conference at Paris. It proved a futile affair, for they could not make decisions about future strategy. The Generals were simultaneously holding a conference at Chantilly, after which they came along and told their rulers what they were going to do. L.G. came away in despair. Hankey talked with him and urged him to insist on a small War Committee being set up to run the day-to-day conduct of the war, thus removing it from the futile discussions of the Cabinet.

The suggestion appealed to Lloyd George, who had indeed previously tried to secure such an arrangement. Great as was his desire to be loyal to Asquith, his will to be loyal to the country was greater, and if firm action were not soon taken the nation's cause was doomed. So he resolved to

demand action. Asquith was more than welcome to remain Prime Minister, but the direction of the war must be handed to a small executive—he suggested three Ministers, the First Lord of the Admiralty, the War Secretary, and a Minister without portfolio—who, subject to the Premier's control, should have full powers to direct the war policy.

After consulting with Bonar Law, Carson and Lord Beaverbrook, Lloyd George prepared a memorandum setting out this proposal, and on 1st December he presented it to Asquith. It was an ultimatum.

## WAR PREMIER

THE story of the crisis which brought about the fall of Asquith and the appointment of Lloyd George as Prime Minister and head of the Second Coalition has been very fully documented. All the correspondence has been published, and detailed accounts of what happened have been given by the principal parties. Asquith, Lloyd George, Beaverbrook have each placed on record their own version of the events, and further notes and interpretations of what happened appear in the writings of Margot Asquith, of Lord Crewe (*Memories and Reflections*), of Tom Clarke (*My Northcliffe Diary* and *My Lloyd George Diary*) and in biographies of the statesmen involved.

The interest it has excited is not surprising, for it was an event of world importance, and it was also climacteric for British domestic policy. The assumption of full powers for the direction of the war by Lloyd George made the difference between victory and defeat for Britain and her Allies in the First World War. The breach between Lloyd George and Asquith which resulted split the Liberal Party into two fiercely antagonistic groups, ultimately causing the collapse of Liberalism and the rise of the Labour Party as the alternative to Toryism in parliamentary politics.

About the actual course of events in those fateful days from 1st to 6th December, 1916, there is very little room for dispute. It is quite clear that Lloyd George and Hankey were far from being alone in realizing that a change was imperative if the war were not to be lost; this had become no less obvious to a number of statesmen and also to prominent editors—who not infrequently have a clearer knowledge of a situation than some members of the Cabinet! Men as various as Lord Northcliffe and Lord Riddell, Lord Beaverbrook, Sir Henry Dalziel and Mr. Donald (of the *Daily Chronicle*) saw that a more forceful direction of the war was essential and that some small committee should supersede the Cabinet for this task. Even the *Morning Post* was beginning to call for Lloyd George to take matters in hand.

The proposition, therefore, which Lloyd George placed before Asquith on 1st December for the appointment of a small committee to take over the full responsibility and power for the direction of the war, subject only to the approval of the Prime Minister, was not just an ambitious snatch at power by the War Secretary. It had, in addition to the direct backing of Bonar Law, Carson and Lord Derby, the

general support of opinion in the best-informed quarters in the country.

It is also very clear that Lloyd George had no desire to displace Asquith. He did not covet the Premiership. He wanted to be put in charge of the war effort, working under Asquith at this task and leaving his chief in undisputed control of the Administration in general. His desire for Asquith to remain Prime Minister was shared by Bonar Law and the other Tory leaders. The only important people who really wanted to turn him out were Northcliffe and Carson.

One can hardly be surprised that Asquith was not greatly attracted by L.G.'s proposal, particularly when it was explained that the War Committee of three should in L.G.'s view be himself, Bonar Law and Carson, who for this purpose should replace Balfour at the Admiralty. L.G. had at the time a somewhat unduly high opinion of Carson, whom he respected as a powerful opponent over the Irish question, and still more for his resignation in anger at the failure to help Serbia; and Bonar Law wished to get him back into office to prevent him from heading a hostile movement inside the Conservative Party. But none of these reasons commended him to Asquith, who also doubted—and rightly—his abilities as an executive statesman. Carson's abilities were mainly in attack and criticism.

Asquith's first response, after due consideration of L.G.'s memorandum, was to agree that the War Committee ought to be reconstituted, but to insist that he must be its chairman and that there should be an appeal to the Cabinet from its decisions. He also reserved judgment as to its personnel, about which he was not prepared to accept L.G.'s proposals. He wrote to this effect to Lloyd George on 2nd December.

The answer was quite unsatisfactory to both L.G. and Bonar Law. But on the Sunday afternoon, 3rd December, Asquith invited L.G. to come and see him, and after full discussion they reached agreement on substantially the lines of the original proposal. The terms of this agreement, which he set out in a letter he wrote to Lloyd George next morning, were:

"The Prime Minister to have supreme and effective control of war policy.

"The Agenda of the War Committee will be submitted to him; its Chairman will report to him daily; he can direct it to consider particular topics or proposals; and all its conclusions will be subject to his approval or veto. He can, of course, at his own discretion attend meetings of the Committee."

The question of personnel was left over for further discussion next day. But Lloyd George expressed himself as in complete agreement with

these terms, and Asquith sent for Bonar Law to tell him about the settlement. After that, Bonar and L.G. went round for a further talk at the War Office.

At this point Lord Northcliffe made an intervention which was to wreck the agreement and bring about Asquith's fall and the shattering of the Liberal Party. He was at this time hardly on speaking terms with Lloyd George, whom he had been attacking for "interfering with the soldiers". But, as a prince of journalists, he was very well aware of what was brewing. Fleet Street has a microphone ear for whispers and rumours, and the meetings of L.G. and Bonar Law, their visits to Downing Street, and the activities of Lord Beaverbrook as intermediary and negotiator could not be entirely hidden. The *Daily Express*, indeed, had published on Saturday a forecast of a new Cabinet War Committee which, while not identical with L.G.'s scheme, closely resembled it. Besides, Bonar Law had been conferring during the Friday and Saturday with his Tory colleagues about the matter, and though L.G. and Bonar Law told Northcliffe nothing, he managed to get a pretty clear idea of the way things were moving.

On that Sunday evening he went round to see Lloyd George at the War Office. Lloyd George, in conference with Bonar Law, refused to see him. But he learned from a secretary that they had come in, in apparent good spirits, from a discussion with Asquith. On the strength of such information as he had managed to glean from various quarters and from his own skilled inferences, he concocted a leading article for Monday's *Times* which asserted that Asquith had given way to Lloyd George and had agreed to a small War Council being set up, of which he himself would not be a member. He added some rather spiteful remarks on the competence of Asquith and certain of his Cabinet for the direction of the war effort.

That smashed the agreement. Asquith wrote in much bitterness to Lloyd George that this leader showed how the plan could be misrepresented and had made him revise his view of it. All that day the Prime Minister was holding discussions with the Liberal Ministers, and would not see Lloyd George. He was finally persuaded by Runciman, McKenna, Grey and the others that Lloyd George was the mischievous plotter and intriguer against his chief which they had long accused him of being, and decided on their advice and insistence to deal firmly with the restless little rebel. Next morning Lloyd George got a letter telling him that Asquith had obtained the King's consent to call for the resignation of all his colleagues and to reconstruct the Government. He had decided to drop the arrangement previously agreed with L.G., and to retain chairmanship of the War Committee. In short, Lloyd George was sacked, and, by implication, offered reinstatement only on Asquith's terms—terms

which carried no guarantee of a more active and efficient arrangement for the conduct of the war.

Lloyd George made the only possible reply. In a long letter he reproached Asquith for going back on the agreement he had made with Bonar Law and himself; referred to the delays and indecisions which had brought Britain and her unhappy Allies—of whom Roumania was the latest example—to repeated disaster; and declined to accept office on the terms offered. He would carry the campaign to the people and

“give them an opportunity, before it is too late, to save their native land from a disaster which is inevitable if the present methods are persisted in. . . . I propose to give your Government complete support in the vigorous prosecution of the war; but unity without action is nothing but futile carnage, and I cannot be responsible for that. Vigour and vision are the supreme need at this hour.”

Asquith had been assured by his Liberal colleagues that he was bound to win in a showdown with Lloyd George. They would all stand by him; they pledged themselves not to serve in any administration of which he was not the leader; and they were certain that no administration could be formed without them. But when Asquith tried to reform his government he found that the Tory leaders would not join it. This made his task impossible. He could not hope to carry on with nothing but a Liberal rump, opposed by the Tories and by Lloyd George and half the Liberal Party. So on Tuesday, 5th December, he resigned.

Bonar Law was invited by the King to head a new administration. But although Lloyd George urged him to take the Premiership, and offered to serve under him, Bonar Law realized that his Tory Party was only a minority in the Commons, and that the Labour Party, the Irish Nationalists and many of the Liberals would refuse to support him. Instead, he went to Balfour, and pointed out that since Grey had resigned, Balfour would be able to take the Foreign Office—a post he had long desired and for which he was well qualified—in a Government headed by Lloyd George, and would escape from the Admiralty, where he was by no means at home. This turned the scale, and when the King, on Bonar Law's advice, invited Lloyd George to form a Government, Balfour and Bonar Law won over the rest of the Tory ministers to support it.

Thus was Lloyd George edged into the Premiership—a development he certainly had not willed when he opened his campaign for a War Committee. Asquith, addressing a Liberal Party meeting on 8th December, asserted that he was the victim of “a well-organized, carefully engineered conspiracy”. No doubt his anti-Lloyd George colleagues had persuaded

him that this was the case, but the facts do not support the idea. The plan, to which on the Sunday he had substantially agreed, would have safeguarded his tenure of the Premiership, and Lord Derby, speaking at the Aldwych Club on 6th December, after describing that plan, said: "I thought, and shall think, that it would have been possible to make such a change without overthrowing the Government." It had been wrecked by the well-aimed sapper that Northcliffe threw into the works with his leader in *The Times*, which alarmed Asquith and gave L.G.'s enemies a means of persuading the Prime Minister that the time had come to crush the man they held to be a treacherous trouble-maker.

For the successful conduct of the war, it was probably far the best thing that could happen. With untrammelled power Lloyd George was able to bring to bear all his ingenuity of resource, his swift activity and his unquenchable will to win, on the dark and at times almost hopeless problems which the next 18 months were to present. For the Liberal Party the affair proved an irremediable calamity. Their broken ranks never re-formed and many of their members and most of their following in the country drifted off in the succeeding years to the Left or Right. Their status as the main body of the Left Wing passed to the Labour Party. Whether or not this was in any case inevitable, as L.G. had prognosticated years before, and whether it was a good or bad thing for the country, are matters which future historians will debate.

The anti-L.G. Liberals cannot be blamed overmuch for the part they played. They had reason for feeling ill at ease with Lloyd George, who, though always a Liberal, never conformed to the Party pattern. In peacetime he was far to the left of the orthodox *laissez-faire* doctrine of the Manchester School, which formed the background of Liberal thinking. Though not a Socialist he was an aggressive social reformer, well fitted to be the leader of a non-Socialist Labour Party. In war he was akin in temper to the stoutest Tory, and far more at home with the Conservatives than with his own Party. Stolid Liberals might well be bewildered by such changes, and regard him as "unsound", a "twister", an unreliable colleague from whom, despite his undeniable ability, fighting quality and immense popular appeal, they were deeply relieved to part.

Lloyd George was probably unaware of the greatness of the disaster he had wrought on his Party; and he was certainly untroubled by it. His job was to win the war. He had the grudging support of the Conservative members and of rather more than half the Liberals. He received a deputation of Labour members the day after agreeing to form a Government, and after addressing them at length on his administrative programme and submitting to their cross-examination, he secured by the narrow majority of one vote the decision of the Labour Executive to support him. The Unionist ex-Ministers also sought him out, and after

getting satisfactory assurances from him decided to serve under his leadership.

The Cabinet reconstruction which Lloyd George carried out can be summarized as follows: in the former Cabinet there had been 25 members. Of these, 14 were Liberal, 1 was Labour and 10 Unionist. These 25 offices were now filled by 7 Liberals, 1 Labour and 14 Unionists and 3 men not yet in Parliament, whose party affiliations were vague. But the Cabinet itself was cut down to the Prime Minister and four other members—Bonar Law, who became Chancellor of the Exchequer, Lord Curzon (Lord President), and Lord Milner and Arthur Henderson, as Ministers without Portfolio. Two new Ministries of Cabinet rank, those of Labour and of Pensions, were given to Labour members, while the new Ministries of Food and Shipping and the new Air Board were filled by Liberals. The brilliant choice of H. A. L. Fisher as the new Minister of Education demonstrated L.G.'s genuine zeal for educational progress.

Of the Unionist members of the old Cabinet, all but one (Lord Lansdowne) were given office in the new Government. But the Liberal Cabinet Ministers had pledged themselves not to take office under Lloyd George, and it was useless to invite them. Asquith had been offered and had refused office under either Balfour or Bonar Law. He would be Premier or nothing. L.G. tried, but at the time unsuccessfully, to get Montagu, the outgoing Minister of Munitions. He wanted to bring in Winston Churchill, but Bonar Law imposed a Tory veto on the idea. The Tories were very slow indeed to forgive Churchill for having left them and joined the Liberals in 1904, and did not forget his work for the Budget League and the Parliament Act. They still blamed him for his quarrel with Fisher and for the failure of the Dardanelles venture. The report of the Dardanelles Commission, which would show that Asquith and Kitchener, not Churchill, were the culprits in that disaster, was not yet public, though Lloyd George had it issued in the following February, very much to Asquith's discomfiture. Lloyd George argued at length with Bonar Law, urging Churchill's unquestioned brilliance, and asking whether, though the young statesman might be rather erratic, it would not be better to have him with the Government than against it. "I would rather have him against me all the time!" was Bonar Law's morose response.

Lloyd George considered that he had constructed a very well-balanced Administration, and did not accept the criticism that the scales had been strongly tilted in the Tory favour. In a letter which he wrote on 12th December to C. P. Scott, the editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, thanking him for an encouraging article he had published about the new Government, he said:

"But what on earth makes you say today that the predominant flavour of the present administration is Unionist? Half the acting Cabinet is Lib.-Lab., the other half Unionist, the President still considering himself to be an infinitely better Liberal and Democrat than four-fifths of the men who now constitute the official Opposition.

"Then take another point: there are 13 offices that count specially in wartime—the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer, Foreign Office, War Office, Admiralty, Home Office, Labour, Food, Pensions, Shipping, Board of Trade, Local Government Board (this Office has the control of the Tribunals and the organization of the Municipalities for war purposes), and last of all Munitions. Of these 7 are Liberal and Labour, 5 Unionist; and one—the Board of Trade—will be presided over by a gentleman who has never attached himself to any political party and has no idea what party he belongs to now. His sympathies, however, are with labour."<sup>1</sup>

The alteration in Ministerial personalities and in proportions of party representation in the Second Coalition was, however, the least notable of the changes which Lloyd George introduced. By far the most important was his creation of a small War Cabinet, four of the five members of which had no departmental responsibilities, and could sit every day, and if necessary all day, dealing with and settling out of hand every problem that arose. There was an end to the endless debates and postponements which had been the bane of the old Cabinet of 25 able and incompatible statesmen. Lloyd George appointed Bonar Law to be leader of the House of Commons so that he himself might be free to give his whole time to the work of the War Cabinet; and Law, who liked parliamentary work and enjoyed the authority thus conferred on him, was well content to be a junior partner in the difficult adventure of conducting the war.

Another original feature was the creation of several new Ministries, and the appointment of prominent business men to take charge of them. A Ministry of Shipping was set up to control Britain's sea transport, and Sir Joseph Maclay, the Glasgow shipowner, was put in charge of it. His practical knowledge of shipping problems, and his shrewd judgement and upright and kindly character, made him an excellent choice for the post. Under him the Ministry of Shipping operated with energy and initiative and made an invaluable contribution to the winning of the war. Lord Devonport, a wholesale grocer, and a former head of the Port of London Authority, was at first entrusted with the new Ministry of Food, but made some rather bad blunders in his efforts to tackle the novel tasks of procuring, distributing and rationing the food of the nation, and he was

<sup>1</sup> Sir Albert Stanley (later Lord Ashfield),

presently replaced by another big-business man, Lord Rhondda—L.G.'s ancient rival in Welsh Liberalism, D. A. Thomas—who profited by his predecessor's mistakes and achieved a large measure of success. A Ministry of Pensions was set up under the Labour member, George Barnes, and a Ministry of Labour under another Labour member, John Hodge. The long-standing trouble about the organization of the Air Services was resolved by the creation of an Air Board under Lord Cowdray.

Finally, Lloyd George decided to establish a Ministry of National Service to take charge of the manpower problem, which had become acute; the Army scraping desperately after fresh recruits, and war industries as desperately trying to secure and retain their labour force. This Ministry he bestowed on Neville Chamberlain, the younger son of his old antagonist, Joseph Chamberlain, and half-brother of Austen, the Secretary for India. The appointment proved not only a mistake but a disaster. Neville was an efficient man of business, an excellent Lord Mayor of Birmingham—"in a rather lean year", as L.G. was wont to remark—high-minded and well-intentioned, but a rather humourless introvert, with no aptitude for creating a brand-new administration on his own initiative when given no very definite instructions or terms of reference. He had, however, a great capacity for taking offence and nursing a grievance. After eight unhappy months, during which he was continually in disagreement with his chief and his colleagues, disliking the helpers offered him, proposing recruitment schemes which the Cabinet turned down, and incurring enormous expense with derisory results, he vacated his office with a bitter antipathy to Lloyd George and a fixed determination never again to be a fellow-member of any Cabinet with him. It was a resolve destined to have calamitous effects on the future history, not only of Britain, but of the world.

Yet another innovation which Lloyd George introduced as soon as he became Prime Minister was the setting up under Sir Maurice Hankey of a Cabinet Secretariat. Previously there had been no record kept of Cabinet discussions or decisions, and Ministers often did not know what had been settled, or placed their own interpretations upon the discussions. From this time forward all Cabinet meetings were recorded, and a minute of the conclusions circulated to Ministers. The practice has proved invaluable and has been maintained ever since. It is another of the innumerable features which L.G.'s initiative contributed to the political and social landscape of Britain.

Lloyd George's saintly old uncle, Richard Lloyd, who had followed with anxious pride the progress of the beloved nephew who was all of a son to him, lived long enough to see his boy rise to the summit of power as Prime Minister. He died on March 1917, happy in the knowledge that

the lad he had nurtured had become the most distinguished son of Wales and the foremost figure in Britain. Lloyd George and he had kept up an almost daily correspondence all through the years. He affectionately termed his nephew's letters his daily "boon"; and his own to David were messages of praise and counsel. As long as he lived he was a steadying influence, a watching conscience, the effect of which on the career of the statesman was wholly good. L.G. returned in full measure the old man's love, and the desire not to cause him grief was a salutary restraint on the effervescent temperament of the younger man, who had been gifted, for good or ill, with an extraordinary surplus of vitality and explosive energy. He was far more alive than most men, vastly more instant and forceful in thought, decision and action. Such a high-powered, supercharged vehicle might well cause swift disaster if it swerved aside from the track, and Britain's debt is greater than it knows to that remote, rural figure, the village bootmaker and unpaid minister of Llanystumdwy and Criccieth, who did so much to form and direct the character of Lloyd George in accordance with his own high standards of honour, uprightness and humanity.

Lloyd George was hardly established before the German Government launched a peace offensive. It delivered to the American *chargé d'affaires* a Note propounding the thesis that Germany and her Allies had been drawn into war only to defend their existence and freedom of national development; that they had shown themselves to be unconquerable, so that a continuation of the war only meant needless bloodshed, and that they were therefore ready to enter on peace negotiations. No indication was given as to the terms they had in mind, though it was learnt a little later that they would have demanded strategical control virtually amounting to annexation of Belgium and north-eastern France, of Poland and the Baltic Provinces, the return of all the German colonies and large transfers of British and French and Belgian colonial territory, as well as extensive indemnities.

The Allies were far from accepting the idea that they had no hope of victory, and they certainly were not prepared to enter into a peace conference on the basis proposed by the German Note. Lloyd George expressed the British view when on 19th December, 1916, speaking in the House of Commons, he quoted Abraham Lincoln's words:

" 'We accepted this war for an object, and a worthy object, and the war will end when that object is attained. Under God I hope it will never end until that time.' "

"There has been some talk about proposals of peace," he added. "What are the proposals? There are none. To enter at the invitation of Germany, proclaiming herself victorious, without any knowledge

of the proposals she proposes to make, into a conference, is to put our heads into a noose with the rope end in the hands of Germany."

France and Russia adopted the same attitude. Next day an invitation to set out peace terms came from President Wilson, who was far from pleased that his move had been forestalled by the Germans. At an Anglo-French Conference, held in London three days after the receipt of Wilson's Note, it was decided to send identical replies from all the Allied Powers to the German Note and also to Wilson's invitation. The reply to Germany was a reasoned and emphatic refutation of her claims and a refusal of her invitation. That to Wilson set out the objects for which the Allies were fighting: the restoration of the small nations overrun by the Central Powers, the liberation of oppressed races in Europe and the Middle East, the end of Prussian militarism and the framing of international agreements to protect countries from unjust attacks.

The Germans retorted by launching their campaign of unrestricted submarine attack on all shipping, allied or neutral. This inevitably forced America into the war, but the German Admiral, von Tirpitz, was confident that it would bring Britain on her knees long before America could render her any aid. He had good reason for his calculation. The Admiralty had as yet found no method of protecting its charges from submarine attack and under this new and ruthless assault the rate of sinking of British merchant tonnage rose appallingly, until in April 1917 it was well over half-a-million tons a month. If nothing were done, we should be forced to give in from starvation.

No solution was forthcoming from the Admiralty. But if Admiral Jellicoe, now the First Sea Lord, held up hands in helplessness, Lloyd George refused to be bested by the problem. The Admiralty had ruled out the convoy system as unworkable, but L.G. made his own inquiries and found that in fact a small convoy system was being worked for the coal shipments to France by Commander (later Admiral) Henderson on his own initiative. Lloyd George studied the question and finally demanded that the Admiralty should give the convoy system a trial. When he could only get the answer that they had the matter under consideration, he told them he would come over to the Admiralty and see them himself to complete the consideration. That threat moved them. L.G. and Hankey forthwith walked over to the Admiralty from Downing Street and on their arrival L.G. found that the Admiralty had changed their minds and were making immediate arrangements to introduce the convoy system. This was the last week of April 1917. In May the first experimental convoys were run, and that month showed a sharp drop in sinkings from the catastrophic April figures. Steadily thereafter the curve of sinkings fell, and, after Geddes took over

the Admiralty from Carson and imposed his aggressive personality on the Admirals, the methods of attack on submarines were also more effectively developed and the curve of the U-boat losses rose.

As the Romans proved more than two thousand years ago, there is much to be said when a nation is at war for appointing a capable leader and giving him dictatorial powers. He will make some mistakes, of course, but he will give unity and energy to the nation's war effort, and things will get done instead of being merely talked over. From the time that he became Prime Minister Lloyd George assumed a considerable measure of dictatorial authority. He had his Cabinet and his Ministerial colleagues to consult, and Parliament was always watchful and contained a bitterly hostile element in the group of Liberals that supported Asquith. But L.G.'s personal initiative and drive enabled him to carry his colleagues with him in his plans for new Ministries and new methods.

There was only one department where his writ did not run, but this was a vitally important one: the military sphere. He had long been suspected of wishing to interfere with the soldiers, and of seeking to have a deciding voice in matters of strategy. The Conservatives only agreed to support him and join his Ministry on condition that he made no changes in the Army Command. He could argue with the Commander-in-Chief, or with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, but he could not give them orders; and the C.I.G.S., General Sir William Robertson, whom the French nicknamed "*Général Non-non*", was quite impervious to any arguments or suggestions coming from a civilian. Lloyd George was always hunting for the new plan, the unexpected strategy which would enable the Allies to break through to victory. Neither Haig nor Robertson had any use for such ideas. Highly competent in their own steady, methodical but unimaginative way, they were resolved to try no strange experiments but to plough on grimly with the policy of attrition, of slowly grinding down the enemy till he should collapse. If the little Welsh lawyer tried any tricks they would rouse their allies in Parliament and in all the drawing-rooms of the West End to frustrate him.

It is worth noting that when the Second World War came Winston Churchill profited by his observation of Lloyd George's experience, and took good care to establish his supreme authority in strategical matters. His War Secretary was not a powerful Society figure such as the Earl of Derby, and there was never allowed to be any question that the Prime Minister and his administration had the deciding voice in the planning and timing of strategical moves.

Lloyd George never possessed such authority; and in consequence the year 1917 was a period of frustration for him as regards its military operations. This is not a history of the war, so it is enough to note that at an Inter-Allied Conference in Rome, on 5th-7th January, 1917, Lloyd

George proposed that the Russian front should be strengthened and that an attack should be launched against the Central Powers on the Italian front. The sending of help to Russia in the form of guns and ammunition was agreed, but not the Italian offensive, for the Italian General, Cadorna, was already pledged to Haig and Robertson at the Chantilly Conference to accept the concentration of strength on the French front. Here a new General had arisen, Nivelle, to replace Joffre, and had won confidence by some bold and original tactics at Verdun. He planned a new offensive for which he required the British to extend their lines, and Lloyd George, sympathetic to any plan which held a hope of a breakaway from the stagnation of the front, worked hard to induce Haig to co-operate with the Nivelle scheme. Whether the plan would have succeeded if carried out as originally designed cannot now be known, for a series of delays interposed before it could be put into force, and the plans for it were captured by the Germans shortly before it was at last attempted. Not surprisingly it became a damp squib, resulting in heavy casualties for the French. These, following on the previous year's slaughter at Verdun, led to mutinies in the French armies, which thereby became useless for anything but defence during the rest of the year, and the British had to carry the Western front.

Haig thereupon got permission to attempt a great offensive in Flanders against the Passchendaele Ridge, with the object of clearing the Belgian coast, where Ostend and Zeebrugge were most troublesome submarine bases. The operation had a deplorable outcome. It was planned without consideration of the weather to be expected in August and September in that district, nor of the nature of the swampy terrain, which massed barrages turned into a bottomless quagmire. It was driven on without regard to the conditions which developed. Neither Haig nor his Chief of Military Intelligence went near the front while the horrible massacre of our troops in the mud was in progress, and they paid no heed to the gloomy reports of the Generals on the spot. The Cabinet at home was carefully kept in ignorance alike of the features in the situation which should have prevented the plan from ever being adopted, and of the ghastly and futile slaughter that resulted. Over most of the front, even the first objective was not approached, and by the time that the attack was at last called off it had cost 500,000 British casualties, vast numbers of them being men drowned or smothered in the mud into which they were driven by the pigheaded persistence of G.H.Q. Repeatedly, when the battle was in progress, Lloyd George begged that it should be called off, for though he did not know till later the full horror of what was going on, he could see that no worthwhile progress was being made. As frequently, he was assured that everything was going splendidly and that we were on the eve of striking successes.

He never forgave Haig for Passchendaele. While he was always ready to make friends with a former enemy, he had no pardon for anyone who badly let him down. The senseless massacre of scores of thousands of British lads because a Commander and his Chief of Staff refused to admit they were making a mistake horrified and infuriated him. He had never been disposed to trust blindly the infallibility of the military chiefs, but after the tragedy of the Flanders campaign he completely lost confidence in them. He could not get rid of them, for in view of the attitude of the Tory leaders this would have brought his administration down with a crash, and he knew that such an event would mean disaster for Britain in the war. Public confidence would be destroyed, and whatever new Government was patched together there would be no unity left for carrying on to victory. But thenceforward he began to cast about for means of bypassing Haig and Robertson, and of getting hold of advice and leadership from some other source.

If the year 1917 gave disappointing results in the West, it showed a more cheerful picture in the East. The force defending the Suez Canal against the Turks went over to the attack in March, and two attempts were made to capture Gaza in southern Palestine. They were not successful, and Lloyd George invited General Smuts, who was then in England, to take over the Egyptian Expeditionary Force. Robertson, however, advised Smuts against accepting, giving him to understand that the War Office would not furnish him with troops or supplies for doing anything worth while. Thereupon Lloyd George arranged to appoint General Allenby, and sent him out with instructions to push the Turks out of Palestine.

This was quite a feasible proposition, given a strong striking force and skilled leadership. The Turkish authorities in the Middle East were corrupt and ineffective. Their Arab subjects were disaffected. Readers of T. E. Lawrence's books will have gathered from them some idea of the fantastic guerilla warfare which that strange knight-errant was able to wage against the Turk in Arabia with the intermittent and highly unreliable co-operation of the Arabs. Allenby managed to organize his meagre forces to such good purpose that in the later summer and autumn he succeeded in launching a brilliant and highly victorious sweep up through the Holy Land.

At the same time a political development was taking place in regard to Palestine which was to have far-reaching consequences. For 20 years past there had been stirring among the Jews in many lands a powerful and well-organized movement—the Zionist Movement—for the restoration of Palestine as their national homeland. Lloyd George came into close contact with this movement in 1915, when as Minister of Munitions he was trying to secure new supplies of acetone. The editor of the *Man-*

*chester Guardian*, C. P. Scott, asked if he could bring along to him. Jewish scientist, Professor Weizmann, writing: "I think the way in which Weizmann might possibly be of use to you is in the organization of chemical works, as he is thoroughly familiar with German methods, which I fancy are considerably ahead of our own." Weizmann was of the greatest help, solving the acetone supply problem; but when Lloyd George gratefully offered to recommend him for an honour he declined, begging only that something should be done for the cause he had at heart, the restoration of the Jews to their ancient homeland.

The appeal won the warm sympathy of Lloyd George. He had always been a good friend of the Jews. Reared from infancy on Holy Writ, and with his mind impregnated with the sayings of the Hebrew prophets and psalmists, he instinctively associated Palestine with the Hebrew people, and looked forward to the day when in fulfilment of ancient prophecy they should return to the land with which, though they had been exiled from it for nearly two millenniums, their name was ineffaceably linked in human history.

For the moment he could do little about it, though he introduced Weizmann to Balfour, who took a keen interest in Zionism, and had in fact discussed it with Weizmann some ten years before. For a time the Zionists' prospects seemed to be imperilled by the understanding reached with France in May 1916, as a result of the negotiations of Sir Mark Sykes and M. Georges Picot (the Sykes-Picot Agreement), whereby the Turkish Empire in the Middle East was to be divided into Russian, French and British spheres of influence, with the Anglo-French dividing-line cutting through northern Palestine. But in the autumn of 1916, when the question of strengthening American sympathy with the Allied cause was growing acute, an Armenian Jew, James A. Malcolm, who was giving expert help and advice to the Government about Middle Eastern matters, approached Sykes and urged that the Allies should capture the sympathies of American Jewry—at that time tending to favour Germany—by a declaration of support for the Zionist cause. Sykes saw the possibilities of the suggestion, and laid it before Lord Milner, who took it up with the Cabinet.

Asquith's attitude was rather unfavourable, but when Lloyd George became Prime Minister he encouraged the scheme. Smuts, too, who joined the War Cabinet in the course of the spring, was an enthusiast for the Zionist ideal. He had the same profound biblical upbringing as Lloyd George, and shared his conviction that the return of the Jews to Zion was divinely ordained. Secret assurances were given to the Zionist leaders through Sykes that the British Government would support their cause if the consent of their Allies could be obtained. A message to this effect was sent to Justice Brandeis, the American Zionist, who was a close

friend of President Wilson, and the help of leading Zionists in all the Allied countries was mobilized.

Nahum Sokolow, acting as spokesman for a Zionist committee which included Weizmann, Herbert (now Lord) Samuel, James de Rothschild and other prominent Jews, visited Paris with James A. Malcolm, and secured through Picot the French Government's agreement. Sokolow then went on to the Vatican and won over the Pope to the project. The chief opposition, indeed, came from a number of wealthy and powerful Jews in the Allied countries, who feared that the establishment of a Jewish homeland would imperil their status as nationals of the countries where they and their forebears had lived and thriven for generations.

Balfour, with Lloyd George's approval, kept up his negotiations with the Zionists, and on 3rd September, 1917, laid before the Cabinet a proposal for a public statement promising the support of the British Government to Zionist aspirations. There was a considerable backing for the proposal on its own merits, but in addition there was a strong argument in its favour on grounds of political expediency. Russia was clearly breaking down. But the Russian Jews, who had hitherto been pro-German, were strong supporters of Zionism, and an Allied declaration in favour of its aims might hold them to the side of the Entente. It would also rally American Jewry, which was similarly pro-German. This argument won over those who were not attracted on its own merits to Zionism. The preliminary draft of the Balfour Declaration was laid by Lloyd George before the leaders of British Jewry. Of the eight men sounded, three were hostile, one neutral, but four, including the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Hertz, strongly supported the proposal. Hertz suggested some slight modifications in the wording, which the Cabinet accepted.

On 2nd November, 1917, while the British forces were sweeping forward to liberate Palestine from the Turks, and just a week before Allenby rode triumphantly into Jerusalem, Balfour sent to Lord Rothschild, with the authority of the Cabinet, a note stating:

"His Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."

In due course the other Allied Governments announced their concurrence in this policy: France in February 1918, Italy in May, the United States in August, and Japan in January 1919.

The language of the Declaration was, of set purpose, diplomatically vague, and gave no explanation of what was to be understood by the term "National Home"—whether Palestine was to become a Jewish State or just a territory in which Jews would have a recognized right to settle and develop their own educational and cultural services. It must be borne in mind that at the time Palestine was not a State at all; it was just a provincial region of the Turkish Empire, a southern part of Syria, with its future boundaries as yet undefined. It was a backward, thinly populated, partly desolate land, with about half a million inhabitants, mostly Arab peasants practising a primitive agriculture. Almost the only bright spots were created by the small pockets of Zionist Jews who in recent years had managed to filter back into the country, to the number of nearly a hundred thousand, developing modern methods of agriculture and civilized standards of life. These Jews suffered heavily during the war. Clearly the country, after liberation, would have to be provided with an interim government from outside, until its capacity to set up and maintain a government of its own had been developed.

The meaning which Lloyd George himself, and the chief statesmen associated with him in the issue of the Balfour Declaration, attributed to the term "National Home" is beyond dispute. His intention was that Jews should be free to go to Palestine and settle there in the largest numbers which the land could be developed to support at a civilized level; and that when by immigration they had become the majority of the population, and were firmly settled in, they should set up their own autonomous Jewish Administration there. By no means all Jews would go to Palestine, or claim citizenship of it, but it would be the National Home of Jewry, just as Ireland is the national home of the Irish, though there are more people of Irish race outside than inside Erin, living as loyal citizens of the United States, Canada, the Argentine and many other States.

Statements since made by Lloyd George himself, by Smuts and other leading members of the Cabinet which issued the Balfour Note, have placed it beyond dispute that this was their deliberate intention. The subsequent history of Palestine has made it no less clear that only on those lines could the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate for Palestine which was based on it have been effectively carried out. The choice before subsequent Governments was either to abandon any idea of making Palestine a Jewish National Home and thus breaking a firm promise or of encouraging to the utmost the immigration of Jews, in defiance of the outcry which this course would raise from the Palestinian Arabs and their fellow-Moslems in Mohammedan lands. But Britain in fact could not make up her mind to adopt either alternative. She allowed enough Jews to enter Palestine and pour money and effort into the country to increase its prosperity by leaps and bounds, but in face of the growing hostility of

the indigenous Arabs and in fear of angering her Moslem subjects in India and the friendly Arab States of the Middle East, she restricted Jewish immigration so that more Arabs than Jews got the benefit of Palestine's new prosperity, and Arab numbers grew by immigration and natural increase more than the Jewish population. So in the end she found herself in uneasy charge of a country of which the Jews, being in a minority, could not be put in charge, while, as they were far above the Arabs in civilization, capacity and wealth, they could not be abandoned to Arab rule. She has learned in bitterness that the policy of falling between two stools is neither pleasant nor profitable. The result, for Palestine, is chaos and internecine strife.

## UNITY OF COMMAND

THE year 1917 is marked out in world history as one of epoch-making significance, not only for Britain, but for mankind.

Its opening weeks saw Lloyd George reconstructing the British Government on an original and revolutionary pattern so as to make it a potent instrument for the effective carrying on of the war: a pattern which, less than a quarter of a century later, Winston Churchill would be able to follow when he had a similar task. It saw, shortly afterwards, the United States abandoning its traditional policy of isolation from European strife, and joining in the fight because it had been reluctantly forced to realize that war, in the modern world, could not be quarantined. That lesson, partly learned in 1917, was to be more fully assimilated in 1941. It saw the Allies' old pattern of coalition warfare, in which each member State pursued its private strategy, break down in disaster, and the new policy of combined strategy, which Lloyd George had from the outset of the war been urging, win acceptance. Thereby the Allies found the road to victory. Most portentous of all for world history, the year 1917 saw the collapse of the Czarist regime in Russia, and the rise of the new collectivist system of the Bolsheviks. The main issues of international relations, as we know them today, date from 1917.

Revolution had long been brewing in Russia. The harsh and capricious tyranny of the absolutist Czar and his pampered and unscrupulous bureaucracy inevitably roused among liberal-minded citizens a spirit of rebellion. Under the strain of war conditions the Government's rottenness and the nation's discontent were both intensified till explosion point was reached. The Russians had suffered appalling losses in the war, where they were herded to the attack with utterly inadequate arms, ammunition and artillery. Food, clothing and other essential supplies for the troops were diverted by corrupt officials for their private profit. The ruling classes waxed fat with illicit gains while the masses were being starved and slaughtered. Tales of the disgusting immoralities practised in Court circles under the leadership of that strange monster, Rasputin, shattered the semi-religious reverence hitherto paid to the Czar, and hardened the dissatisfaction of all liberal and enlightened elements in Russia into a temper of bitter and determined revolt.

Lloyd George had for some time been dissatisfied with the failure of the huge Russian military machine to wage effective warfare on Germany. The mission he had purposed, but had been unable to carry out

with Kitchener in June 1916, had for its object to discuss with the Russian rulers a closer unity of strategy and to find out what munitions and equipment Britain could most usefully send to them. In September 1916 he tried to get Sir William Robertson to go with Lord Reading on a similar mission, but Robertson, advised by some of L.G.'s enemies in the Cabinet that it was a scheme to get him away from the War Office, refused to go. When Lloyd George became Prime Minister he at once arranged for a mission, headed by Lord Milner, to go to Petrograd for an inter-allied Conference. The Conference was held in February 1917. It was by then too late to save the Russian situation. Within less than a fortnight after the British mission arrived back in this country revolution had broken out in Russia and Czar Nicholas II had abdicated.

The revolution was not, at the outset, a proletarian movement. It started in the Headquarters of the Army and among the princes and wealthy industrialists who were leaders in the Duma—that powerless simulacrum of a Russian Parliament. But the whole national administration was so rotten that when once the Czar had resigned and his principal bureaucrats had been displaced, those distinguished men who had ousted them found themselves unable to maintain a reformed government, because the country just fell apart. Competition for the control of Russia became a "free for all". Soldiers' and Workmen's Committees—Soviets—formed themselves to dictate their own arrangements. For some time Kerensky, the moderate Socialist leader, managed to poise himself on top of the shifting and squirming pile of competing movements—the Soviets, the Duma, the Generals and the surviving bureaucrats. But in the autumn he lost his foothold, and was thrust aside by a far more resolute and forceful personality. On 7th November, 1917, Lenin, with his henchman, Trotsky, led a Bolshevik column into Petrograd, overthrew the Kerensky Government and seized power.

For a considerable time Lenin's authority extended over only a part of Russia, and there was no certainty whether he would keep on top or be displaced by the anti-Bolshevik forces led by "White" Russian generals in the Crimea, the Caucasus and Siberia. But as ruler of the two capitals, Petrograd and Moscow, and of Western and Central Russia, Lenin was able to end Russia's part in the war and seek terms of peace from the Central Powers.

The Russian revolution has left a legacy of problems for the world which are still with us. At the time, it gave rise to two major difficulties for Lloyd George. In Britain, it stimulated dangerous agitations for an imitative Bolshevik revolution and withdrawal from the war. In the field of strategy the breakdown of the Eastern front released large enemy forces which could be brought against the Allies in the West.

In its first stages the Russian revolution had been gladly welcomed

by both Britain and France, where long-standing detestation of Czarist tyranny had become combined with disgust and alarm at the rottenness and incompetence of the Russian Government as a warring ally. The hope was general that Russia would become an enlightened democracy, and that the able men who headed the revolution would prove more efficient comrades in the struggle against Germany. But, as they were pushed aside by wilder and more irresponsible Soviet agitators, the prospects alike for Russia's future and for her co-operation in the war darkened.

Left-Wing minority Labour movements, however, in both Britain and France, hailed the rise of Russian Communism and thought to start similar developments in the West. Ramsay MacDonald, the pacifist leader of the Independent Labour Party, held in June a Conference at Leeds, at which it was proposed to set up a Council of Soldiers' and Workmen's Committees on the Russian model, to dictate to the Government and bring the war to an end. MacDonald decided to go off to Russia to colloque with the Soviet leaders, but the members of the Sailors' and Firemen's Union, who after their experience of German U-boat outrages were anything but pacifist in temper, flatly refused to convey him, though Lloyd George had agreed to the issue of his passport, and made efforts on his behalf to get the sailors' embargo lifted.

Few tears were shed by L.G. over MacDonald's disappointment. But another development for which the Russian revolution was responsible caused him much greater distress. Arthur Henderson, the leader of the Labour Party, was a member of his War Cabinet and had been a loyal and useful ally. Lloyd George thought that he might be a good man to post as ambassador to the new Russia, since his Labour background would no doubt make him more acceptable to Kerensky and his Socialist colleagues than Sir George Buchanan, the experienced diplomat then at Petrograd, whose sympathies were all with the aristocratic circles that had formerly controlled the country. Henderson was sent to Russia on a mission to urge the new Government to keep up its war effort. He had a look at the work of the Embassy and decided that it was not in his line.

But his stay in Petrograd and his contacts with Kerensky and the hot-headed Socialist enthusiasts who were dreaming of building a new heaven and earth there so upset his normal sanity that on his return to England he broke loose from Cabinet loyalties, and in defiance of his colleagues and of the Premier he worked to win over the Labour Party to agree on collaboration with the Minority movements in the Allied countries and with the Russian Soviet in a proposed Stockholm conference on peace aims. The Cabinet was furious, and a meeting was summoned to decide what line to take. Henderson, during the preliminary discussions, was left waiting in another room. He deeply

resented being thus "left on the mat", and took a still more defiant attitude, ending by resigning his post in the Cabinet. But though an able man, Henderson was no Kerensky, and Britain was not Russia. He must soon have realized that he had not the smallest chance of heading a Left-Wing move which would carry him to power as leader of a Socialist Britain.

The military effects of Russia's collapse were even more immediately menacing. Even before the final surrender to Bolshevism on 7th November, 1917, her fighting capacity was obviously crumbling away, and the Central Powers could with an easy mind arrange to concentrate more freely against their other foes. In shaping their strategical plans they had the immense advantage that the German High Command was in supreme control, and could swing its own forces and those of its Allies against any front at its choice. The Allies maintained independent control of their respective forces, and each Allied Commander-in-Chief was predominantly interested in the front of which he was the guardian, and anxious to see all the strength of his country concentrated there. As both the British and the French Governments tended to bow down before the advice of their Army heads, the result of this separatism was that Allied strategy, during the first three years of the war, was constantly impotent in face of a German initiative. When Serbia or Roumania was assaulted, Britain and France looked on, powerless to help, because their Chiefs of Staff had no plans ready for such a situation, and their generals were not willing to send away any of their forces to serve on another front under an alien commander.

At the inter-allied conference in Rome, which at Lloyd George's suggestion was convened in January 1917, he put forward a proposal that the Allies should support a spring offensive on the Italian front. The British and French Army heads opposed this because they wanted the 1917 offensives to be on their own fronts; and Cadorna, the Italian C.-in-C., turned down the offer in deference to his military colleagues. So 1917 saw the Nivelle offensive in April on the French front, which nearly wrecked the French Army, and the Passchendaele offensive from July to December, which cost the British 500,000 casualties. Each of these assaults was made in vain against powerfully held fronts. It was left for the Germans, when the Allied strength had been wasted on them, and the menace of the Russian front was plainly ending, to adopt in their turn the Lloyd George plan which Allied generals had rejected, and to detach a formidable body of their troops for an offensive on the Italian front.

On 24th October a combined Austrian and German blow was launched against the Italians, whose front in the neighbourhood of Caporetto collapsed entirely. In little over a fortnight the enemy pene-

trated to a depth of 70 miles, and the Italians lost 600,000 men with all their guns, ammunition and stores of every kind. It was an immense disaster, and might well have meant the total defeat of Italy.

Lloyd George, whose capacity for instant decision made him always rise to the heights in a crisis, at once ordered Sir William Robertson to move troops to the Italian front in co-ordination with the French. The one valuable relic of the abortive Rome Conference had been the framing of military plans for the possible contingency of an operation on the Italian front. These were now put into force, and Lloyd George himself dashed off to Italy to discuss the situation with the French and Italian Premiers. He reached Rapallo on 4th November, and next day a three-day conference started which was to prove crucial for the future course of the war.

At this conference Lloyd George put his foot down and insisted that there must be real co-ordination of the Allied military effort, by the setting up of a Supreme War Council of the Allies, with an Inter-Allied Committee of military advisers which would be in continuous session to oversee and direct their policy and strategy, in much the same way as he had set up for war purposes in Britain an inner War Cabinet which could concentrate on directing the war effort, instead of letting it become the theme of interminable debate at periodic meetings of a Cabinet of more than a score of members. This was a plan which had already been recommended by Lord French and Sir Henry Wilson, and had been outlined by Lloyd George in a letter he wrote to President Wilson on 3rd September. He had also submitted it to the French President, Painlevé—in a letter dated 30th October, soon after the news of the Caporetto disaster came through. Before proceeding to Rapallo he obtained Painlevé's agreement at a hurried conference with him in London on 2nd November. He immediately secured the approval of the War Cabinet, and took their decision in his pocket when he went to Rapallo.

It will be easily understood that he swung the Rapallo Conference into line, and came away with his proposal translated into a definite inter-Allied agreement. But Sir William Robertson showed himself violently hostile to the scheme. An essential feature of it was the military committee, on which Foch was to sit for France and Sir Henry Wilson for Britain. L.G. insisted that Robertson, as C.I.G.S., must be the adviser of the British Government and could not remain at Versailles as an inter-Allied military adviser. The fact was that Robertson, highly competent in his own sphere of military organization, was suspicious of all new ideas, especially if advanced by civilians, and had the most complete distrust of all foreigners. He would never have been party to letting them have any say in the operations of British troops. This attitude had hitherto made impossible any real joint action by the Allies, and Lloyd George

realized that his new scheme would remain a scrap of paper unless he took resolute action to break this resistance.

With this end in view, he stopped at Paris on his way back from Italy, and on 12th November he delivered a speech there in which he spoke with brutal frankness about the failure to date of Allied strategy and military ventures. The reason for this, he declared, was that Allied unity, so far as strategy was concerned, was pure make-believe; "and make-believe may live through a generation of peace, it cannot survive a week of war. It was a collection of completely independent schemes pieced together. Stitching is not strategy. So it came to pass that when these plans were worked out in the terrible realities of war, the stitches came out and disintegration was complete". Real unity, not sham unity, was the only path to victory, and the new scheme for an Inter-Allied Council must be made to work.

Lloyd George got back to London to find that he had stirred up a wasps' nest. Sir William Robertson, who was furious at the threat to his authority contained in the constitution of the Inter-Allied Council, with its Committee of military advisers on which Sir Henry Wilson represented Britain, was trying to enlist the support of Lord Derby, the Secretary of State for War, and was far from seeking to dissuade those people—from *The Times* to the anti-Lloyd George Liberals—who might be willing to take up the cry that the Premier was interfering with the soldiers. These hostile coteries were also incensed at the aggressively plain speaking of the Paris speech, and succeeded in inducing Asquith to put himself at their head and lead a parliamentary attack on Lloyd George, against his Paris speech and his Rapallo policy.

The debate took place on 19th November, 1917. Before it was held, Lloyd George's friends were acutely anxious as to its outcome. Lord Esher wrote from Paris, entreating him to stand firm:

"Any weakening in the face of opposition either in Parliament or in the English Press would be fatal to your influence here. . . . France leans upon England, and for France there is only one English statesman whose name is an honourable one. These people watch for any sign of weakness; and at the first symptom of our collapse, the remnants of governmental authority in France will disappear."

This was no more than the truth. Though the French Press had warmly welcomed Lloyd George's speech and the setting up of the Inter-Allied Council, the French Premier, Poincaré, had fallen next day, and had been succeeded after some delay by Clemenceau, who was cordially hated by most of the political groups, and was not expected to last three months, if

as long. Had Lloyd George fallen, France would have broken down in chaos, despairing of any successful outcome of the war.

Lord Derby wrote on 18th November pleading that Lloyd George should give assurances that the military advisers of the new Council should be carefully subordinated to Robertson, and not be allowed to discuss anything without his prior knowledge and approval. Lord Curzon wrote urging that L.G. should see Robertson before the debate, and reach an understanding with him. Frederick Guest, the Coalition Liberal Whip, wrote:

"I feel sure that you would do well to ask Winston to be ready to 'stand by' with a speech for Monday. I have an idea that you may be hard pressed. Mr. Asquith has not taken on this debate lightly."

Their alarm proved to be ill-founded. Lloyd George's Paris speech had been, as he admitted, deliberately disagreeable, but it had also been disconcertingly truthful in its damnatory review of the Allies' past strategical failures, so in dealing with it Asquith was thrown on the defensive. He could not deny that under his administration the Gallipoli expedition had broken down, that first Serbia and later Roumania had been crushed by the enemy without any of the promised help of the Allies being sent to them. Besides, a message had been published that morning from President Wilson, conveying his warm support of the scheme for the Inter-Allied Council and deputing his intimate henchman, Colonel House, and the American Chief of Staff, General Bliss, to be the political and military representatives of the United States. So Asquith was doomed to be ineffective alike in his criticism of the Paris speech and in his questioning of the desirability of the Council. Lloyd George, on the other hand, had what even his enemies admitted to be a great House of Commons success with his reply. He declared that, far from interfering too much with the soldiers, the Government had supported them more fully and consistently than any previous Government—with guns, ammunition, transport, shipping, railways, supplies, men. Not a single battalion or gun had been moved except with the advice of the General Staff. *The Times* said next morning that L.G. had achieved a great personal triumph, and had vindicated the essential soundness of the Rapallo scheme.

Thus ended Round 1. But it was only Round 1. There was still a long way to go before a real unity of strategy, such as Lloyd George saw was essential to an Allied victory, could be brought into effect.

Meantime there were plenty of worries for the British Premier. In the west, the latter part of November saw the splendid failure of the Tank assault round Cambrai, where a real break-through was achieved by a well-planned use of these new weapons, but the troops which should

have turned the German defeat into a rout were not there; they had been sunk in the swamps of Passchendaele; and the Germans were able to counter-attack and regain most of their lost ground and a part of our own front. In the east, the end of November saw the Bolshevik Government in Russia negotiating an armistice with Germany. At home, there was acute anxiety about transport arrangements for the British forces in France, Italy and Greece, which nearly forced Lloyd George to agree to a reshuffle of his Cabinet to enable Eric Geddes to take over the supervision of the problem. There was also a deplorable *contretemps* as regards the Air Ministry, which added a new and powerful enemy to the growing number of Lloyd George's ill-wishers in the person of Lord Cowdray.

The transport trouble came to a head as a result of the Caporetto disaster and the consequent movement of British troops to Italy. Geddes, the First Lord of the Admiralty, had gained the permission of Lord Derby, the War Secretary, to take over General Nash to help him with naval transport problems. But after Caporetto, Derby found that the military transport situation was so complex that, far from being able to spare Nash, he wanted more help. Geddes talked the situation over with L.G., and offered to leave the Admiralty if a competent successor could be found, and once again tackle the heartbreaking job of straightening out the tangle of Army railway traffic. Derby was of course delighted when he heard of this and wrote to the Premier:

"The whole question of transportation must be taken together, both sea and land, as they are so intermixed, especially with the different theatres of war, Italy, Salonika, Egypt and Mesopotamia, as well as France, that any divorce between them might spell absolute confusion and breakdown. . . . It might be possible to make Geddes not only Inspector-General of Transportation but also Shipping Controller. . . ."

Maclay, he suggested, might change from his Ministry of Shipping to the Admiralty. But Geddes, after an interview with Maclay, felt this would not be a satisfactory solution, and Lord Milner wrote to Lloyd George: "The more I think of it, the less I like taking Geddes from the Admiralty." Maclay himself wrote: "While I would feel myself bound to fall in with what you might desire, my judgment is . . . that this Ministry is my right sphere." In the end the proposed change was abandoned. Geddes went over to France with Nash to examine and advise on the transport problem, but continued to hold the Admiralty.

The trouble over the Air Ministry was an example of the less fortunate results which might sometimes follow from Lloyd George's habit of swift action to carry out an idea that had just occurred to him. Always

quick in making up his mind, he had been compelled from the moment that he took on the Ministry of Munitions to live in a whirl of snapshot decisions. They were the necessary preliminary to any action, and as the need for action was clamorous, plans for it had to be thrown together and choices made on the spur of the moment. Some of them, no doubt, were not the best possible; some proved to be blunders and had to be put right by fresh decisions. But there was probably no one else in the country who could have risen to such an electric speed of instant response to problems, and without an administrator so gifted there would until too late have been no effective speed-up in the design and output of munitions.

When Lloyd George went on to the Premiership he retained this habit of mercurial improvisation and decision, the need for which was hardly less in this new post, having regard to the acutely critical state of the war. But blunders now had more public and far-reaching consequences. The choice of Neville Chamberlain as first Minister of National Service was an error of judgment, the calamitous results of which were to blot the page of history. The blunder which in an impulsive moment he made about the Air Ministry had a damaging effect on his own future and on the future of organized Liberalism.

Lord Northcliffe came back on 12th November from a mission to the United States in which he had been markedly successful, and Lloyd George, anxious to make further use of so capable a figure, looked round to see where he could place him. The new Ministry of Air, the setting-up of which had just been approved by Parliament, would have to tackle unfamiliar problems in its tasks of combining the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service, and of creating a new, independent striking force, at once ancillary to and parallel with the Army and Navy. Lord Cowdray had done good work as chairman of the Air Board, but L.G. thought that perhaps a younger man with sounder health and more drive would run the Ministry better. He quietly sounded Northcliffe to find out whether, if the job were offered to him, he would like to take it on.

Northcliffe, who felt himself capable of running the whole country, might have accepted the offer of a seat in the War Cabinet, but had no intention of submitting to the drudgery of a departmental Ministry. He saw, however, a magnificent chance of self-advertisement, and wrote a letter to L.G., and published it in *The Times*, declining with a flourish the post which had not yet been actually offered to him, and adding a tirade against conscientious objectors, enemy aliens, Press censorship and various other pet aversions. Cowdray, not unnaturally, was furious at learning that apparently Lloyd George had, without mentioning the matter to him, offered his post to someone else. He at once resigned, and from that moment became one of L.G.'s most implacable enemies. As

owner of the *Westminster Gazette*, and an important member of the Liberal Party, he was able for years to direct adverse publicity against the Welsh statesman.

Cowdray was not the only person to regard L.G.'s idea of putting Northcliffe in charge of Air as very ill-advised. Sir Eric Geddes, the First Lord, wrote in tones of dignified remonstrance, pointing out that as the Air Ministry would have to co-operate with the Army and Navy, he and Derby ought to be consulted before a new man was chosen for it. "Especially in its inception," he wrote, "the personal factor will make very largely for the success of the new Department in its relations with the older Services." Walter Long, the Colonial Secretary, wrote in a more irreverent vein about the mess which L.G. had made, saying, "In school-boy language, 'it jolly well sarved you right'. . . I could have told you the nature of the reply you would receive to your offer, and saved you this unpleasant rebuff."

It must perhaps be admitted that Lloyd George, who had a high regard for brains and ability, and sought always to get hold of the ablest men, was not infallible in his judgment of their more solid qualities, and sometimes picked on men who were less scrupulous than they were clever. Whether he was really insufficiently aware of their defects, or whether he resigned himself to the use of the tools he could get, preferring on the whole an implement of high-tempered steel, even with a crack in it, to a flawless piece of soft iron, may be open to debate.

Certain it is, however, that while Lloyd George might be betrayed now and again by his fondness for ability into such a mistake as this approach to Northcliffe, he had in general a very shrewd understanding of the quality of the men with whom he associated. This understanding guided him in what was the most difficult and most important task of his whole career. In the spring of 1918 the Allies drew perilously near the doorways of defeat. One measure only saved them and enabled them in due course to advance to victory—the acceptance of unity of command. It was supremely by his success in forcing through this plan that Lloyd George became the "Man that won the War". The foes he had to overcome in order to give Britain the victory were those of his own household—the War Office, the Asquithian Liberals, and even sceptics and critics in his Cabinet.

His triumph in the debate of 19th November, 1917, had enabled him to go ahead with the Inter-Allied Council which had been decided on at Rapallo. This Council met at the beginning of December, and again on 30th January, 1918—this time to examine the plans for the 1918 campaign which its military advisers had been instructed in December to prepare. Foch had put up a plan whereby the Allies would be ready, if the Germans launched an offensive, to counter it with a diversionary offensive on a

different part of the front; and with this end in view he proposed that a General Reserve should be set up, drawn from all the Allied Armies, which could support any army suffering attack or be used to launch the suggested counter-offensive.

The Allied Generals, Haig and Pétain, did not favour the idea of any Allied offensive during 1918. But at the Conference of 30th January the scheme for an Inter-Allied General Reserve was strongly supported by Lloyd George, and unanimously agreed by the Council and the military chiefs, who accepted the proposition that it should be set up and be under the direction of an Executive Committee consisting of the military advisers of the Council, under the chairmanship of Foch. Robertson outwardly accepted this decision, but inwardly he was furious. It meant an encroachment upon the almost unlimited powers which had been conferred on him when Kitchener was War Minister—powers which as yet Lloyd George had been unable to curb. Now a Frenchman, in consultation with Sir Henry Wilson, was to be able to order about a number of British soldiers without asking Robertson's permission. This, he knew, was Lloyd George's doing. He would deal with Lloyd George!

Robertson hurried back to London and poured out his trouble to Colonel Repington, formerly of *The Times*, now of the *Morning Post*. Either Robertson himself or his close ally and follower, Sir Frederick Maurice, must have told Repington the contents of the Top Secret minutes of the Versailles decisions, for on 11th February a long article by Repington was published in the *Morning Post*, giving away the whole plan for the General Reserve to be under Foch's orders; retailing the discussions of the Supreme War Council, even to the point of quoting actual phrases; and calling on the Army Council to rebel against the Government and refuse to accept the Versailles decision.

This was open war, and a grave threat to Lloyd George's administration. The public betrayal of the Allies' secret plans to the enemy was an act of treachery, but it was difficult to bring Repington and the *Morning Post* into court on a charge of treason, for to establish the charge it would have been necessary to admit that the Supreme Council's plans had been correctly reported, whereas the only hope was that the Germans would doubt the accuracy or importance of Repington's revelations. So only a prosecution on a minor charge of a breach of the Defence Regulations could be launched, and nothing worse than a fine was imposed.

But if the betrayal was a major military disaster, the political effect was also perilous. Asquith and his Liberal followers joined with the group of Tories who were prepared to back up the Army against the civil authorities in a parliamentary assault on Lloyd George. He was throughout his war premiership in a difficult political position. He retained about half the Liberal members, but without the party organization, and thus

had no machine under his control which could furnish him with a parliamentary majority. He was always dependent on such support as he could gather from the Tories, the Labour Party and his wing of Liberalism—a miscellaneous backing, without internal cohesion. Whenever one of these recurrent attacks on him was launched he could not count on a party majority. If he won—and fortunately for the country he always did win—it was by his oratorical power and his adroitness in debate.

This time the charge against him was to be that he had gone against the advice of the heads of the Army on a military issue. Robertson was known to be in open rebellion against the Versailles plan. It had come to be a final trial of strength between him and L.G. If L.G. lost, unity of command would go by the board. There would continue to be no real co-operation between the Allied forces, and Ludendorff would be able to beat them down successively at his will.

Constitutionally there could be only one answer. The country is not ruled by its Army, even in war. The Prime Minister is the chief Minister of the Crown, through whom the nation's authority is exercised. Since Robertson would not accept the Prime Minister's decision, endorsed by the Cabinet, he had to go. L.G. was in bed with a heavy chill, but he sent Balfour to offer Robertson the choice of remaining as C.I.G.S. and accepting the Versailles decision or resigning that office and going as the Military Representative to Versailles in place of Wilson, if he thought that was now the more important post. He would agree to neither course, so L.G. deemed him to have resigned, and arranged for him to be given an appointment as O.C. Eastern Command. In the parliamentary debate L.G. scored an easy victory when he stated the facts of the situation, and the second round had been won.

Victory, however, was still far from complete. While the Allied Commanders, Haig, Pétain, Cadorna and Pershing, had agreed to the scheme of a General Reserve, they had failed to carry out the measures to constitute it when on 21st March the Germans launched their full offensive against the British front. So there was no mass of manoeuvre for Foch to dispose of and fling in to reinforce the Fifth Army when Ludendorff, reinforced with the troops he had collected from the Russian front, sent them crashing across the Somme just above the junction of the British and French lines, and drove on almost to the gates of Amiens.

At the moment it looked as if the war would be lost. Lloyd George sent Milner over to discuss the situation with Clemenceau and see what could be done to pull things together. At the Doullens Conference, held on 26th March, it came to light that Haig was thinking of retreating north with the British armies while Pétain proposed to fall back on Paris. Foch, on the other hand, was quite unshaken by the Allied defeat and

insisted that the breach could and must be closed. In the end, with Haig's full concurrence, it was decided that Foch should be charged by the British and French Governments to co-ordinate the action of the Allied Armies on the Western front. This was the third round in the struggle for unity of command, but still fell short of being truly effective, because both armies were standing on an uneasy defensive and, as Foch complained, he could not co-ordinate activities when there were none!

Finally Lloyd George himself went over and held a further conference with Clemenceau at Beauvais on 3rd April, 1918, at which the military heads of the British, French and American Armies were also present. Here he managed to persuade his own side—the French and Americans already were prepared to accept the suggestion—that it was vital to appoint a supreme commander to control all the Allied forces in face of the German attack. Foch was given this post, and after L.G. got back he induced the Cabinet to agree that the French General should be recognized as Commander-in-Chief of the Allied Forces. At last, just before it was too late, the crucial step was taken which was to give the Allies the victory. All the world recognized later that this measure, and this alone, made it possible to defeat Germany. To Lloyd George belongs the credit of having seen its necessity years before, and of risking his own position again and again in a grim and desperate struggle to force the plan through in the teeth of the stubborn resistance of the British military authorities and the bitter attacks of a hostile political coalition of Liberals, Tories and powerful newspapers—of which the last-named were by no means the least dangerous.

One final attack—the most bitter and unscrupulous of all—was made on Lloyd George by this miscellany of foes. Sir Frederick Maurice, a devoted follower of Robertson, who held the post of Director of Military Operations at the War Office, was replaced by another general on the instructions of the new C.I.G.S., Sir Henry Wilson, a couple of months after Robertson's fall. He thereupon intrigued actively with the anti-Lloyd George group, and finally wrote to the Press charging Lloyd George and Bonar Law with making false statements about military arrangements and statistics in their parliamentary speeches. Asquith was induced to base on this a parliamentary attack on the Prime Minister and to demand a Select Committee to investigate the charge. Lloyd George was furious. It was May 1918, and the war was at its most critical stage. The Maurice letter avowedly had the aim of overthrowing the Government, and had it succeeded in this the Allied cause would certainly have collapsed. Only men blinkered by personal hatred could have sought at this moment to shatter the Administration. Anyhow, Lloyd George was not going at such a time to submit himself as defendant to the inquisitions of a Select Committee because a disgruntled servant of the

Government who had lost his job chose to make charges against him which, if they had any foundation, were based on secret information which Maurice was strictly bound not to disclose.

The debate on Asquith's motion brought L.G. another triumph, for he was able to show that the impugned statistics had in fact been supplied to the Cabinet by Maurice's own office, and that the other statements in the explosive letter were incorrect. Maurice was put on retired pay, though his grateful allies later on got him a comfortable post as head of the British Legion. The national feeling against the men whose spite had led them to jeopardize the national safety by this attack on the Government was so bitter that at the next election all of them, from Asquith down, lost their seats.

The Allied Unity of Command which Lloyd George brought into being with such travail gave the possibility of ultimate victory. The measures he took to rush American troops to France made possible that victory in 1918, instead of one or two years later.

Never was there a more dramatic demonstration than this of the way in which Lloyd George defied the word "impossible". At the beginning of 1918 the Americans had one division in the line, and their shipments of men and equipment were steadily falling behind schedule. When the German break-through occurred in March there were about 300,000 American troops in France, of which a third were non-combatant supply services, and only one division was fully trained. Not unnaturally, their military authorities were planning to wait until they could deploy fully trained divisions in an intact American Army, rather than allow their men to be brigaded with British or French forces. So Lloyd George had to master two impossibilities—to induce a young and proud nation to place its troops under alien control, and to bring those troops across the submarine-infested Atlantic with shipping which was barely sufficient to supply Britain and her Allies with their essential imports of food and war materials.

Lloyd George achieved the impossible. His appeals to the United States Government and people awakened a generous response and their consent to unrestricted emergency use of the American forces. President Wilson also accepted L.G.'s request for 120,000 troops a month to be sent across the Atlantic, on condition that Britain furnished the bulk of the shipping for their transport. L.G. demanded the impossible of Sir Joseph Maclay, his Minister of Shipping, and that harassed but loyal henchman scrapped his schedules and somehow produced the necessary vessels. By the summer the rate of transport rose to 250,000 a month. By the close of the war there were getting on for two million American troops in France, of whom more than half had been brought over by the war-weakened British merchant fleet. All their artillery was supplied by the

British and French, and most of their aircraft. But their massive presence on the Allied side, and the gallant fight they put up when brought into action, combined to convince the German High Command that the issue of the war was certain, and that only an early armistice could save the relics of the Teutonic armies from annihilation.

If the Second Coalition gave Lloyd George a seat—albeit a shaky one—in the place of power, from which he could direct and organize victory in the war, it also gave him the opportunity he had long coveted of pressing forward on a non-party basis some of the reforms in which he was most interested. Prominent among these were Education and the reform of the franchise, including votes for women. Busy though he was with the fateful issues of the world conflict, he found time for the carrying through of epoch-making measures to deal with both of these matters.

The Representation of the People Bill was given its first reading on 15th May, 1917, and received the Royal Assent on 6th February, 1918. It swept away all the old restrictive qualifications and set up a straightforward manhood suffrage for parliamentary elections, and introduced votes for women aged 30, if householders or wives of householders—i.e. occupying land or premises worth £5 a year or more. The local government franchise was simplified and extended to everyone, male or female, occupying any land or premises in a local government area. Plural voting, which had long been anathema to the Liberals, was cut down to a maximum of two votes—one for residence, one for business or university.

The measure was hailed—especially by Liberals—as the greatest of all Reform Bills; and in fact it covered a vast amount of ground and made many bold and progressive changes in the electoral system. But without doubt its enactment of votes for women was the most significant of all its provisions.

The Education Bill introduced by H. A. L. Fisher on 10th August, 1917, which received the Royal Assent on 8th August, 1918, aimed in its own sphere as high as the Reform Bill. It was specially directed towards organizing the post-elementary stages of education; raising the school age to 15, developing central schools and multiplying secondary schools, and authorizing continuation classes part-time up to 18 for all who left school before they were 16. It was, in fact, a measure thoroughly after L.G.'s education-loving Welsh heart. Unfortunately the bringing into force of the provisions for the higher school-leaving age and the continuation classes had to be left for settlement after the war, by agreement between local authorities and the Board of Education; and in the event, most local authorities shirked the exercise of the powers conferred on them, and those features of Fisher's Act remained a dead letter. Better fortune attended the Standing Joint Committee set up under

Lord Burnham's chairmanship to fix teachers' salaries, and the "Burnham Scales" became a valued charter for that hitherto much underpaid profession.

The summer of 1918 saw another trouble arising for Lloyd George out of Ireland. In May 1917 he had proposed to give the Irish immediate Home Rule, subject to temporary exclusion of the six counties of Ulster, but the Nationalists rejected this out of hand. Instead, it was agreed by all Irish parties—except the subterranean but swiftly growing forces of Sinn Fein—to join in a Convention to hammer out a solution of the Irish problem. In February 1918 this Convention agreed by a majority to a plan for Irish Home Rule which Lloyd George had laid before its chairman, Sir Horace Plunkett. But before the proposed measure could be enacted the crisis on the Western front forced the Government to rush through a new Conscription Bill. This, on the insistence of the Tory members of the Administration, was extended to Ireland. Lloyd George stipulated that as a *quid pro quo* the proposed Home Rule measure should also be enacted. But this gesture was useless. The Nationalists would not hear of conscription, but in any case they no longer represented the bulk of the southern Irish, who were drifting over to the Sinn Fein camp—a movement which the threat of conscription instantly accelerated.

By May detailed information came to hand of a widespread Sinn Fein plot for an Irish rising. The Government published the story and arrested the Sinn Fein leaders. But the Convention scheme for an immediate Home Rule measure had by now perished everlastingly, and the stage had been set for those lurid final scenes in the Irish tragedy which were to be played out after the war and to leave a cloud on Lloyd George's record which no excuse can entirely obliterate. Conscription was never actually applied to Ireland. Its proposal, to which Lloyd George had given a forced and inattentive consent amid his preoccupation with the war crisis, brought voluntary recruitment in Ireland to an abrupt end, and proved to be a deplorable blunder with no mitigating feature.

During the summer and autumn of 1918 Lloyd George's task was lighter because of the successful working of the Allied military machine under its unified direction. For him, the main duty was to keep up the morale of the nation, to deal with labour problems, and to resist the pressure of pacifist movements which were urging a premature peace. In the dark days of June and July, when the Germans seemed again to be advancing on Paris, his resolute and confident oratory put new heart into the people. Then the tide turned, and through August, September and October the Central Powers were being swept back across France and Belgium; the Turks were being hustled out of Mesopotamia; and in the Balkans the army which had so long sat immobile at Salonika roused itself into a belated carrying out of the eastern strategy so long before

urged by Lloyd George, and struck up into Bulgaria and Roumania. Ludendorff, who had seen the writing on the wall when the British advance of 8th August smashed his front, began to insist that his home government should ask for an armistice; and on 4th October Prince Max of Baden sent a letter to President Wilson asking for an armistice on the basis of the President's "Fourteen Points" and his subsequent pronouncements about the essentials of permanent peace.

It was the beginning of the end. Wilson temporized, and L.G. held conferences with the French and Italians at which Foch's military terms for an armistice were agreed. A reply which L.G. drafted was sent to Wilson, commenting on his answer to Prince Max and setting out the conditions on which alone an armistice would be considered. Meantime the Germans on the Western front continued in full retreat. The Italians broke through the Austrian forces in the battle of Vittorio Veneto. The Turks signed an armistice on 29th October, and the Austrians hoisted the white flag on the same day. Mutiny broke out in the German Fleet and on 8th November a delegation from Germany met Foch in the forest of Compiègne to receive the Allied terms for an armistice. Next day the Kaiser fled to Holland, and in the early morning of 11th November the German delegation signed the armistice terms. At 11 a.m. the guns ceased to fire all along the Western front, and maroons bursting in the sky over London signalled the end of the war.



*Part V*  
IN THE CAULDRON OF PEACE  
1918—1922



## CHAPTER XVII

### VERSAILLES

POLITICAL activities are of two kinds. There is the process of gaining and retaining power; and there is the use to which power is put. This latter phase of politics, the defining and pursuit of a policy in administration and legislation, attracts the constructive statesman. The other side, the work of party organization, political manoeuvre, enlisting supporters, conciliating powerful interests, engaging in the poker play of personal negotiations, is the aspect which makes politics a fascinating game to many of its devotees. To them, policies are counters, to be valued or discarded in proportion as they win or lose votes. It was this aspect of politics which the old Lord Salisbury obviously had in mind when he made to a friend an observation which Lloyd George was fond of quoting with amused relish: "Politics is a dirty game, sir, a dirty game! I'm thankful to say I have two sons doing very well in it!"

Lloyd George had entered politics with the object of getting certain things done. Policy for him was pre-eminent; and neither friends nor foes would hesitate to admit that he had outstanding ability and initiative in conceiving and putting forward bold legislative proposals and carrying through the administrative measures which he considered desirable for the nation. His achievements as a statesman have been deeply graven into the social and economic structure of Britain; they have shaped the development of the British Commonwealth and Empire; they have directed the course of world history. In or out of office, he was unwearying in planning reform and offering counsels of action.

But in that other side of politics, which to some politicians is its most intriguing and exciting part, he was far less interested, and markedly less successful. For him, a policy was never just a bait to trap votes, but something which ought to be done, whether it won votes or lost them. His greatest work of domestic statesmanship, the system of National Insurance, was forced through in the teeth of popular distaste. His master-stroke of wartime administration, the securing of unity of command, was profoundly unpopular, not only with his critics but with most of his supporters. In the course of his political career he had, of course, to look round for allies and engage in manoeuvres and personal negotiations, but while his psychological skill in knowing and adapting himself to the mind of the man with whom he was dealing enabled him to score many a brief success, he could not maintain his interest in that game for long. Enemies called him an intriguer. But he was in fact a

poor hand at intrigue—much worse than he himself realized. No really skilful devotee of the art of political intrigue would have strewn his onward course, as Lloyd George did, with powerful enemies who had been, and might have been retained, as powerful friends. A brilliant statesman, he was often a maladroit politician.

Yet no statesman, however wise and beneficent, can do his work unless he has the necessary party support to set him in office and sustain him there. As the war drew to a close, Lloyd George found himself without any such secure foothold. Asquith, from whom he had parted, retained the support of half the Liberals in Parliament, and of the official party machine in the country. The Unionist Party supported L.G.'s Coalition in the person of his colleague, Bonar Law, but a considerable section of it regarded L.G. himself with unconcealed suspicion. A majority of the Labour Party had supported the Coalition's war effort, but since L.G.'s breach with Henderson it no longer gave him personal backing. Ramsay MacDonald's I.L.P. Wing was definitely in opposition.

The first question for Lloyd George to answer was, of course, whether in these circumstances he should try to hold on to the Premiership and take charge of the peace negotiations, or should retire for the time being in the full glory of his war success, and let his critics try their hands at framing the peace settlement. A shrewd politician of the lower order might not improbably have calculated that the second course would be the cleverer. If, when hostilities ended, he had taken a long vacation from politics—gone, perhaps, on a world tour—leaving Bonar Law and Asquith to compete for the Premiership, the winner would have started his task handicapped by the distrust of half the country, and would assuredly soon have roused loud criticism and hostility in his attempts to settle the desperately tangled affairs of Europe and the Middle East. It might not have been difficult for L.G., with his prestige undimmed, to return and rally round himself a powerful following, capturing either the opposition or the unhappy party in power. He was, and would remain, far and away the biggest figure in British politics. But if this idea was considered by him—and there were friends to suggest it—he did not for a moment find himself attracted by it. He was not that kind of politician. Dynamic, insatiably active, he could not imagine himself taking any other course than that of flinging himself into whatever task waited to be done. Tired he might be, but the day was yet far distant when he would be tired enough to stand aside and willingly leave others to grapple with critical issues of statesmanship.

He had no organized Party. For a time he toyed with the idea of creating a Centre Party, which his friend and supporter, Winston Churchill, with the help of Frederick Guest, the Chief Whip—a personal friend of Churchill—was longing to organize. Churchill, half Radical

and half Tory, heir to the Tory Democracy of his father, Lord Randolph Churchill, would naturally have been most at home in a party which straddled both sides of politics, and Lloyd George himself had always been inclined to coalition. Hot reformer though he was, he found himself often more at ease with thoughtful Tories than with rigid Liberals. But a Centre Party was out of the question. It would have involved trying to chisel away a large section of progressive Tories from the party of his colleague, Bonar Law. And while Lloyd George was all too capable of rounding savagely on an ally over a genuine difference on policy, he was not capable of betraying him treacherously in cold blood. So he decided on the alternative course of trying to organize his wing of the Liberals into a coherent party which might form a post-war coalition with the Tories in his support.

For some months before the end came Lloyd George had been quite clear that as soon as possible after the fighting ceased there must be a General Election, so that a new Parliament could express the will of the people as to the terms of peace. He and Bonar Law were agreed that they should continue the Coalition in the new Parliament, so that peace should be made as nearly as possible on an all-party basis. He would have liked to draw in on his side the whole of the Liberal Party, which was split not on principles but by a bitter personal feud. But Asquith, and even more the group around him, would not hear of reconciliation, and an offer by Lloyd George to make Asquith Lord Chancellor and take him to the Peace Conference was rejected. So Lloyd George could only count on his own Coalition wing of the Liberal Party, and the *Daily Chronicle* was bought in October 1918 to furnish him with an organ of publicity.

It was a curious situation. The First Coalition had been set up by Asquith and his Liberal Government, with the full support of the Party. When Lloyd George replaced Asquith as Prime Minister, the Tories, Labour Party and half the Liberals continued their support of this second Coalition, the only persistent opposition coming from the Asquithians, whose basis of opposition was purely a personal vendetta against Lloyd George. When the Government decided to go to the country after the armistice to get a new Parliament and a mandate to conduct the peace negotiations, they of course could not fight on a party programme. Lloyd George and Bonar Law put out a joint programme (of which Asquith admitted his approval) for care of soldiers and sailors, increased production, agriculture and land development, housing, education, disarmament, fuller employment, sex equality, House of Lords Reform, self-government for India and Ireland. But their main appeal was for a national vote of confidence in them, to support them at the Peace Conference. This the Asquithians refused to give, and in consequence found

that supporters of the Coalition were put up against them in most of the seats they held.

Within the Coalition ranks there was, of course, an official truce. But the Labour Party decided, on 14th November, 1918, to withdraw from the Coalition, and Labour and Asquithian Liberal candidates fought in the December election as opposition parties. There was also a vast array of freak candidatures, so in 600 of the 707 seats there were contests, in which 1,518 candidates took part.

Lloyd George himself could spare very little time for watching over the election arrangements. These were left in the hands of the Coalition Whips—Sir George Younger for the Tories, and Frederick Guest for the Coalition Liberals. L.G. and Bonar Law signed letters commending to the electors those candidates whom the Whips certified as approved supporters of the Government. These letters were known as "Coupons", and the election itself became known as the "Coupon Election". Younger was a very shrewd and capable politician, and proved more than a match for his colleague, so in the event considerably more than twice as many "Coupons" were distributed to Tory candidates as to Liberals. In the mood of intense popular enthusiasm for Lloyd George which prevailed at the time, the Coupon was an almost certain passport to the House of Commons. There were 540 Coalition candidates, of whom 526 were elected. Of these, only 131 were Coalition Liberals.

The Asquithian Liberals were in a hopeless position. They stood in opposition to the Coalition, yet could put forward no ground for opposing it except hatred of the Liberal statesman who was its principal figure; the statesman who was for the moment at the zenith of his popularity with the nation. They did what they could with this lamentable battle-cry. They preached, whispered and hissed hatred throughout the Liberal Associations in every constituency they could reach. As an election cry it was a disastrous failure. Only 33 Asquithians were returned to Westminster. Even Asquith himself, though L.G. protested against a Tory being put up against him, and refused a Coupon to the Coalition candidate, was defeated in the soundly Liberal constituency of Paisley. But they scored a bitter-sweet success with their propaganda. Liberalism throughout the land was torn in twain, never to be reunited, and its spirit was poisoned with the virulence of the hate-teaching injected into it in the course of the fight, so that never again could Liberal meet Liberal without suspicion. The other fellow might be a Lloyd-Georgeite! And if so, be his Liberalism never so stainless, he was regarded by the Asquithians as a viper, or at least a leper. As one of the two major political parties of Britain, Liberalism perished in 1918; perished by its own hand.

The Government won the election with a tremendous majority. It obtained 526 seats out of 707—nearly a three-to-one lead over all

other parties, or, if the Sinn Feiners were omitted, as they refused to take the oath or sit in Parliament, nearly a five-to-one superiority. But in the course of the fight Lloyd George had a foretaste of some of the difficulties which the next few months would bring him. Deeply concerned to go to the Peace Conference with a mandate for a just and impartial settlement which might have the seeds of permanence, he started the Election campaign by preaching caution about the probable yield of Reparations, and deprecating any notion of a Carthaginian peace. He preferred to look forward to a revival of prosperity and a return to the tasks of domestic reform. The task confronting the nation was, he urged, to make Britain a land fit for heroes to live in. But the strident cries of those who wanted a vindictive settlement stampeded several of his followers into reckless pledges to hang the Kaiser and squeeze Germany for reparations till the pips squeaked. Even Lloyd George, under strong pressure from his friends, went so far in his speech at Bristol on 11th December as to declare that Germany could be justly called on to pay for the war, though he warned his hearers that he doubted whether much could be got out of her; and while he did not promise to hang the Kaiser, he agreed that Wilhelm should be held responsible for the crime of the war, and put on his trial as a criminal.

This question of the Kaiser's guilt was indeed among the first to be discussed between the Allies. There had long been a popular clamour on both sides of the Channel for revenge to be wreaked on him as the author of the war and of all the atrocities which Germans had committed in its course. Clemenceau was very willing to take it up, and less than a week after the Armistice was signed he pressed the issue on Lord Curzon. Lloyd George and his Cabinet referred it to the Law Officers, who with the aid of a distinguished legal committee produced a verdict asserting the legal propriety of putting the Kaiser on trial. L.G. was too much of a lawyer to assert that he would hang the Kaiser before trial, but also too much of a lawyer to reject the ruling of the highest judicial authorities when they held that Wilhelm could properly be indicted as a criminal.

Preparations for the Peace Conference were hurried on. There was a most insistent demand from business men in Britain for the early conclusion of peace, so that they could resume world trade. Till peace was signed they could do no business with the former enemy countries, and could not even be sure what states would remain in existence, or to which of them some important cities would belong.

Lloyd George tried hard to secure the holding of the Conference in a neutral centre such as Geneva, so that the statesmen assembling for it should not meet in the excited atmosphere of a belligerent nation. But Clemenceau insisted on Paris, claiming that France had suffered worst

in the war, and had a right to see the peace made on her soil. He persuaded President Wilson to accept his view, and L.G. had to bow to their verdict.

As for the statesmen who were to lead the Conference, Clemenceau put himself at the head of the French delegation, and Lloyd George led the British team, while Orlando, the Italian Premier, appeared for his country. To their alarm, President Wilson decided to come himself as the leading delegate of the United States. This was awkward, since the President was a potentate, albeit only a temporary one, and had to step down, as it were, from his throne to take part in the discussions of the Conference. It was a false move on Wilson's part, but it sprang from his aloof, self-centred disposition and his distrust of all the front rank Americans whom he might have chosen to represent him. Those same defects made him refuse to associate with himself any of the leading Republican statesmen, whose collaboration might have made the peace treaty a bi-partisan settlement. The result was to prove a tragedy for mankind, as it caused the ultimate rejection of the treaty by the American Senate, thereby making the peace an abortive one, and setting the world on the road which was to lead in a couple of decades to another and more terrible world war.

So far as Britain was concerned, the main lines on which it was proposed to resettle the world had long since been laid down in pronouncements by both Asquith and Lloyd George. As far back as 1914 the Allies' war aims had been defined in both England and France as the crushing of Prussian militarism, the full restoration of Belgium and Serbia, establishment of the rights of small nations and reinforcing international justice against the threat of future aggression. At the end of 1916 the British Foreign Office prepared a quite detailed scheme for post-war European settlement, including the creation of a League of Nations. This scheme and the preceding declarations of war aims formed the basis of the statement which the Allies sent to President Wilson in January 1917, in reply to his request for their peace terms. At the same time Lloyd George set up the Phillimore Committee to work out a scheme for a League of Nations. When the Imperial War Cabinet met in March 1917 it confirmed the proposed lines of peace settlement, adding thereto the need to strip Germany of her former colonies, which they regarded as a menace to their security and their trade routes.

President Wilson's Fourteen Points, on the strength of which the Germans appealed for an armistice, were statements of general principle which in most respects re-echoed the ideas behind these earlier Allied pronouncements. Where they differed, as they did in respect of the "Freedom of the Seas" and the extent to which Reparations might be exacted from Germany, it was pointed out to Wilson that the Allies

would have their own interpretation to place on these statements, and Wilson did not really mind much, so long as superficial agreement with him was maintained. He was a difficult, stiff-jointed figure, a theoretical idealist of the loftiest kind, determined to base all his decisions on the purest Christian ethics, yet so encased in egotism and intellectual pride that he lacked all warmth of human sympathy and brotherly good fellowship. Indeed, he approached perilously near to that hapless figure described by St. Paul:

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

When Lloyd George was preparing for the Peace Conference he encountered one curious difficulty which was to have a damaging influence upon his career for the rest of his life. He found that Lord Northcliffe, the owner of *The Times* and the *Daily Mail*, wanted to go to Paris as one of the heads of the British Peace delegation! The paths of Northcliffe and Lloyd George had frequently crossed before this. They had several qualities in common—energy, originality, clear-sightedness, irreverence, autocratic temper. During the war Northcliffe had recognized in L.G. the one man who could pull the country through and intermittently backed him, but had attacked him bitterly for "interfering with the soldiers", and, after carrying out a useful mission for him in America, had put him in a bad hole over Lord Cowdray and the Air Ministry. The Press Lord had the very serious defect that while he was prone to command he was incapable of co-operation. He could have henchmen but not colleagues.

Always imperious and domineering, Northcliffe was now beginning to suffer from that "illusion of grandeur" which was an early symptom of the grim disease that was slowly to creep on him during the next three-and-a-half years, steadily impairing both body and mind, and bringing him in August 1922 to an untimely and tragic end. Convinced that he was the ablest and most powerful figure in Britain, he demanded of Lloyd George a post in the British peace team. In the end, Lloyd George impatiently told him to go to a warmer place than Paris. The furious Press Lord never forgave him, and thenceforward set himself, through his various papers, to attack and traduce the Premier in every possible way. When mud is persistently and viciously thrown, some of it will stick. The unscrupulous blackguarding and misrepresentation launched by Northcliffe combined with the bitter hate campaign of the Asquithians

to deface Lloyd George's reputation. The public at large, constantly meeting hints in both the Right-Wing and the Left-Wing Press that the Welshman was an unreliable twister, corrupt, venal and treacherous, began at last to assume that this must be at least partly true, and the time came, in the years ahead, when those who plumed themselves on being shrewd and knowledgeable would curl the lip and wink sceptically at the mention of his name.

The Peace Conference was opened in Paris on 18th January, 1919. In preparation for it, Lloyd George had gone over the aims to be pursued by the British delegates, and secured full agreement about them in the Imperial Cabinet, at which the Dominion Premiers were present. The British team consisted of Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Balfour, Barnes (the one Labour leader who had remained with the Government) and one or other of the Dominion Premiers, who took this fifth place in turns. Asquith was not invited to form one of the five, since he had previously turned down L.G.'s offer of the Chancellorship. The Tories, who now were by far the largest party in Parliament, would not easily have agreed to the delegation including two Liberals and only one Conservative, though if Asquith had accepted the post of Lord Chancellor, L.G. might have been able to take him in Bonar Law's place, and would have been prepared to do so. Asquith would have been a strong addition, and Lloyd George bore him no ill will; he was habitually ready to renew friendship with an opponent whom he had defeated. The men he was slow to forgive were friends whose folly or treachery let him down.

The story of the Peace Conference is a part of world history and has been told in detail by many pens, including that of Lloyd George himself. It was a strange concourse which gathered in Paris during the first six months of 1919. There were the plenipotentiaries of the belligerent nations and their staffs and experts; the cloud of pressmen hunting for copy; representatives of minority groups in many lands, anxious to plead their causes; big business men with interests to advance or defend; starry-eyed idealists pursuing their missions, and the inevitable crowd of camp-followers, sightseers, gapers and quidnuncs.

As a matter of fact there was no lack of idealism among the able young men who formed the British staff and teams of experts. President Wilson had come over from America with an idea that he was the one high-minded idealist who would bring light into the dark places of Europe. On the contrary, the young men of Europe had for over four years been fighting and dying to uphold justice and freedom, while for two and a half of those years Wilson had been "too proud to fight". He was resolved to create a League of Nations, and indeed his eulogists later tried to claim that he had forced the League into the Treaty of

Versailles in the teeth of cynicism and apathy of the European statesmen. In fact, the League of Nations had been advocated for years by both British and French statesmen; the draft which Wilson brought over for it—a draft so jejune that in the end he would not produce it—was by his own admission based on the recommendations of the Phillimore Committee. The proposal at the Peace Conference that the League should stand first on the agenda came from Lloyd George, and the constitution ultimately adopted for it was largely based on a draft written by General Smuts.

But as the Conference progressed it grew hard for the idealists to maintain their loftiness of soul. They found themselves plunged in among a throng of people from many nations, each with his own special axe to grind, each greedy to secure the maximum advantages for his own side in the resettlement of the map, and some of them prepared to fake statistics and press fictitious claims. There was an atmosphere of horse-trading and of gross personal and national ambition which drew a murky cloud across the starlight of those visions of justice and freedom and world peace which had shone so clearly on their faces as they came to Paris. Some grew disillusioned and bitter, and went away to write savage things about the Peace Conference and the tough and sordid nature of the bargaining being carried on by the statesmen in whose hands lay the final power of decision.

The pessimism, though mistaken, was natural. For the settling of the hard practical details of a treaty is a very different thing from the pronouncement of noble principles on which the treaty is to be based. Noble principles could not disentangle the bewildering intermixture of races on the Continent, nor fix the compensations in cash or territory or reparation goods to be accorded to rival claimants. President Wilson's Fourteen Points had not settled whether the Italians or the Serbs should have Fiume, whether Upper Silesia should be German or Polish, or Teschen be included in Czecho-Slovakia.

It had been agreed between the principal Allies that the representatives of Britain, France, United States, Italy and Japan should be the main body to draft the Peace Treaty with Germany; representatives of the other Powers who had fought on the Allied side only being called in to the discussion when matters directly affecting them were being considered. All would naturally be present in the full Congress. Lloyd George insisted, despite all that had been said and written about the advantages of open diplomacy, that the discussions in the inner Conference should not be open to the Press, as this would mean that they would be extended through all the newspapers and all the parliaments of the world while they were in progress, and public clamour might arise which would improperly influence the settlement. As it was, things were bad enough, for informa-

tion was constantly leaking out to the Press, and L.G. was continually subjected to a barrage from the French—and often the English—Press.

The first stages of the Peace Conference work were carried out in what was known as the Conference of Ten, that being the number of delegates from the Principal Powers that met to discuss matters. But it proved too slow and unwieldy a Committee, and towards the end of March Lloyd George resolved to get a move on, and arranged with Clemenceau, Wilson and Orlando that the four of them should meet in continuous session until they had settled the peace terms. There can be little doubt that such a scheme was essential if the Treaty was to be drafted. With so great a mass of conflicting interests and abstruse problems to be treated, debate might have been interminable, and the only way to reach a conclusion was for the "Big Four" to agree among themselves and announce their decisions. But inevitably a good deal of sore feeling was roused among the other delegates to the Peace Conference, who felt that they had been relegated to the status of mere spectators. Nor, ultimately, was the effect on Lloyd George himself beneficial. Naturally something of an autocrat, his position as War Premier had developed that strain in his character, and his role in the Peace Conference, where he and his colleagues laid down the dread, immutable law whereby the boundaries of the world were to be fixed, intensified this habit of mind. In his earlier days he had been extremely adroit in allaying opposition. He was later more disposed to bludgeon it.

If the idealists grew disheartened at the sordid atmosphere of the Paris Conference, the very unidealistic men who had been packed into the House of Commons at the Coupon Election presently began to grow alarmed at reports that Lloyd George was being too lenient to the Germans in the terms he was proposing. On 8th April a message, signed by 370 Tory M.P.s, was sent to him which said:

"The greatest anxiety exists throughout the country at the persistent reports from Paris that the British delegates, instead of formulating the complete financial claim of the Empire, are merely considering what amount can be exacted from the enemy. This anxiety has been deepened by the statement of the Leader of the House on Wednesday last.

"Our constituents have always expected—and still expect—that the first action of the peace delegates would be, as you repeatedly stated in your election pledges, to present the bill in full, to make Germany acknowledge the debt, and then to discuss ways and means of obtaining payment.

"Although we have the utmost confidence in your intention to fulfil your pledges to the country, may we, as we have to meet

innumerable inquiries from our constituents, have your renewed assurance that you have in no way departed from your original intention?"

It can hardly be claimed that this was seemly language from a band of supporters who had secured election to Parliament on the strength of their pledges of entire support for Lloyd George! But they were in truth very far from being the kind of supporters that Lloyd George would have chosen to rally behind him, if he had been able to spare time to oversee the selection of Coalition candidates. A discerning observer looked at them when the House first assembled and described them as a gang of hard-faced men who looked as if they had done well out of the war. They were no architects of a new and better world order; a large proportion of them were skilful followers of the main chance.

Lloyd George had to hurry back from Paris in order to deal with these rebels, and on 16th April he spoke in the House defending his conduct of the peace negotiations, and dealing very faithfully with Lord Northcliffe, who had been mainly responsible for creating the trouble, by a telegram he had sent from Paris to Kennedy Jones, a satellite of his in the Commons. Lloyd George knew all about the telegram, as the French Government authorities had shown it to him before it was despatched. The 370 alleged they had wired on the strength of information from a "reliable source". "Reliable!" retorted L.G. "That is the last adjective I would use. . . . I would as soon rely on a grasshopper!" He bitingly described Northcliffe as a man who had deluded himself into the belief that he was the only man who could win the war, and waited vainly for the clamour of the multitude to demand his elevation to supreme authority—but not a whisper, not a sound!

"It is unnerving; it is upsetting! Then the war is won without him. There must be something wrong. Of course, it must be the Government. Then, at any rate, he is the only man to make peace. The only people who get near him tell him so, constantly tell him so. So he publishes the Peace Terms and he waits for the call. It does not come."

L.G. thoroughly enjoyed trouncing Northcliffe; and in the process he of course diverted much of the unwelcome attention away from his own handling of the peace negotiations. For it was quite true that he was seeking a settlement which would be far more reasonable and pacific than the vindictive peace hoped for by the "hard-faced men". In his speech he declared:

"We want a peace which will be just, but not vindictive. We want a stern peace, because the occasion demands it, the crime demands it. But its severity must be designed not to gratify vengeance, but to vindicate justice. Every clause and term in those conditions must be justified on that ground."

He had already, on 25th March, 1919, submitted to Clemenceau and Wilson a lengthy Memorandum setting out his ideas as to the basis on which peace should be made and indicating what he thought should be the main features of the Peace Treaty. As regards its general character, he wrote:

"It seems to me that we ought to endeavour to draw up a peace settlement as if we were impartial arbiters, forgetful of the passions of the war. This settlement ought to have three ends in view. First of all it must do justice to the Allies by taking into account Germany's responsibility for the origin of the war and for the way in which it was fought. Secondly, it must be a settlement which a responsible German Government can sign in the belief that it can fulfil the obligations it incurs. Thirdly, it must be a settlement which will contain in itself no provocations for future wars, and which will constitute an alternative to Bolshevism, because it will commend itself to all reasonable opinion as a fair settlement of the European problem."

The terms he indicated in his brief outline sketch of a Peace Treaty were in most respects very similar to those which ultimately appeared in the Treaty of Versailles. They included the grant of a Polish corridor; demilitarization of the Rhineland; cession of Alsace-Lorraine to France and either French ownership of the Saar coalfields or a lien on their coal for a period of years; the surrender of the former German colonies; and payment of reparations for a period of years, at a rate to be fixed after examination of Germany's capacity to pay.

The moderation of this document aroused furious anger among the French, who were pressing for a frontier on the Rhine—a claim which L.G. stubbornly resisted, declaring that the British would never consent to the creation of another "Alsace-Lorraine" in Europe by placing a whole province of one nationality under the dominion of another nation. For reasons which were comprehensible then, and are not less so today, the French wanted in one way or another to mangle and chop up German territory so that the Germans would be too crippled to attempt another assault on their western neighbours. When they found themselves quite unable to secure agreement for the incorporation of the Rhineland in

France, they demanded a long-term occupation of bridgeheads on the right bank of the Rhine to ensure the carrying out by Germany of all the terms of peace, including the payment of reparations and indemnities. This too was resisted by Lloyd George with the support of Wilson; but while L.G. was in England in April, dealing with the rebels in Parliament, Clemenceau succeeded in persuading Wilson to give way, and on his return to Paris L.G. found himself in a minority and, after holding out for some time, had finally to fall in with the views of his colleagues. The compromise, however, fell far short of satisfying French opinion, which wanted the occupation to continue until the last payment of reparations had been made. Since the French were presenting a bill for reparations which vastly exceeded the maximum amount that Germany could possibly pay across her frontier, this demand was equivalent to one for perpetual occupation of the Rhineland.

The problem of the bill which Germany was to pay proved the most difficult issue of all. Lloyd George was quite clear that on grounds of justice and long-established international precedent Germany could be held liable for all the costs of the war which she had inflicted upon her neighbours. But he was no less clear that those total costs, however drastically taxed, would be far greater than Germany could pay within any calculable period. Here, however, he was faced with the difficulty that the French would not hear of the scaling down of their astronomical demands, and his own advisers—bankers and economists—were optimistic as to the amount that could be extracted from Germany. Even Maynard Keynes, whose later attacks on the reparation clauses of the Treaty were to work far-reaching disaster to world peace, was joint author of a Memorandum urging that if payments were spread over a long term of years a far greater sum could be extracted than the maximum immediately in sight. The public at home, and especially the business community represented by the Coalition Conservatives in the Commons, were clamorous for compelling Germany to pay the whole cost of the war.

Lloyd George was sceptical. Not being an economist, he was not the victim of any abstruse scientific theory which might blinker his common sense. He saw clearly that after any initial reparations in kind had been extracted, a long-continued tribute from Germany could only take the form of manufactured goods on a scale which would make her dominate world markets, to the grave detriment of manufacturers in the victorious countries. There was nothing like enough gold in the world, even if Germany had owned it all, to pay the bill! She might have paid something to devastated France in labour for restoring her wrecked towns and mines. But the French industrialists wanted those jobs and would not agree to them being given to Germany.

The position therefore was that while the French would not agree

to any total bill for reparations and indemnities being entered in the Peace Treaty which came short of their immense and indeed exaggerated demands, Lloyd George was no less insistent that nothing should be set down which it would be impossible for the German signatories to carry out. He wanted a real settlement, not a sham. So in the end he got round this impasse in the only way then possible, by postponing the fixation of the total reparation payment. Germany was to acknowledge her legal liability for all the loss and damage she had caused to the Allies, and a Reparation Commission was set up to extract from her what she was able to pay. She was to pay £1,000 millions in the first two years, and within the next thirty was to pay as much as the Reparation Commission should fix, having regard to her resources and capacity. Keynes had furnished a Memorandum proposing a scale of payments rising from fifty to four hundred million pounds a year, and ultimately producing a total sum of eleven thousand million pounds.

It is worth noting that when Germany's Reparation payments ceased in July 1931, the Reparation Commission assessed their total (including costs of occupation) at £1,010 million, while the Washington Institute of Economics calculated that they amounted in all to £1,905 million. Since at that date Germany's total debts to foreign investors stood at over £1,150 million, it is evident that most if not all of her payments for reparations and cost of the occupying troops came out of other people's pockets!

A heavy handicap on Lloyd George and his colleagues in the Conference Chamber was the vindictive temper of the peoples outside, whom they represented. If L.G. had his 370 Tory M.P.s to hold down, Clemenceau was being goaded by a yet more bitter and untamable following, which would approve no mercy for the Germans. Although the Allies had agreed after the Armistice to provide Germany with food, L.G. learned in March that the Germans in the occupied zone were starving, for the French had refused to let the food go through. Who was going to pay for it? they argued. If Germany had any money, it was due for reparations! Only L.G.'s resolute insistence, and President Wilson's backing, secured the passage of the food to the hungry enemy. It is indeed one of the miracles of history that a peace settlement framed amid an atmosphere of such angry passions turned out to be so surprisingly fair and reasonable in its provisions.

At first those provisions were applauded universally by liberal-minded people; but in subsequent years the Versailles Treaty became the object of persistent and subtle attack by German propagandists and by well-meaning dupes who were induced to support and embroider their thesis. Keynes' attack on the Treaty in his book *The Economic Consequences of the Peace* was used to support this propaganda, which eventually succeeded

in creating a widespread impression of the injustice of the Versailles terms. There is, indeed, no little substance in the theory recently advanced by Etienne Mantoux that Keynes' book, the fallacies of which Mantoux ruthlessly exposes, was responsible in no small degree for the growth of public opinion which made possible the appeasement policy and thus led to the Second World War. It was not without reason that L.G. said of Keynes: "His superficial brilliance covered the most unbalanced judgment amongst the economists of the day."

Before the peace terms were finally settled, the Big Four had dwindled to the Big Three. Orlando, the Italian Prime Minister, insisted on the cession of Fiume to Italy. L.G. and Wilson would not hear of this. Fiume had been promised to the Yugoslavs. After stormy altercations Orlando flung away in a huff, and the other three put the finishing touches to the draft.

The Germans offered to send messengers to Paris to receive the draft terms, but were firmly told they must send plenipotentiaries. Eventually, on 7th May, a great assembly gathered in the Trianon Hotel at Versailles. and Clemenceau rose and in a short speech presented the draft terms to the German representatives. Their leader, Count Brockdorff-Rantzau, created a very bad impression by reading his reply sitting down (he was in fact too nervous to get to his feet). Three weeks later the Germans produced their comments on the draft, in which they protested strongly against several of its provisions. L.G. discussed this protest with his team, and decided to press for some modifications, especially in the proposed Eastern frontier of Germany. President Wilson had a romantic enthusiasm for the restoration of Poland, and was disposed to back its greediest demands. Only the most determined stand by L.G. induced his colleagues in the Big Three to accept some rectifications of the German-Polish frontier, and to agree to the holding of a plebiscite in Upper Silesia. He also succeeded in getting a moderating proviso inserted in the Reparation clauses. With these and some other modifications the treaty was returned to the Germans, and after further protests and a change of government they finally signed it on 28th June at Versailles.

Its authorship, inevitably, was composite. Some of its terms were governed by agreements or declarations which had been made in the course of the war, and some by the effects of the breakdown in Germany and still more in Austria-Hungary. But when allowance is made for these limiting circumstances, and for the adoption in certain cases such as the Tyrol or the Sudetenland of a strategic rather than a purely ethnographic frontier, the Treaty of Versailles stands as a masterly attempt to redraw the map of Europe in such a way as to liberate its peoples from alien tyrannies. The Covenant of the League of Nations which stood first in the Treaty might well have proved—but for the calamitous withdrawal of

the U.S.A.—the charter and constitution of a new world order of peaceful co-operation. The International Labour Office, which is still with us after surviving a second and yet more terrible world war, is an unwearying architect of improved conditions for workers throughout the world. One of the most important clauses of the Treaty was that which provided for revision of its terms, if they should prove unfair or unworkable; but the existence of this clause has been ignored by the critics of Versailles.

It is not unfair to claim that the major share of credit for the fair and constructive character of the Treaty of Versailles is due to Lloyd George and his British team of helpers. Suspect by his own supporters at home, gradually drawing on himself the execration of the French who had hailed him as the incarnate spirit of victory, he fought doggedly for a peace which should be just and capable of permanence. This it might well have proved, if all its signatories had kept faith and carried out its terms. The faults which led on to another war were not in the Treaty but in the statesmen who failed to honour its provisions.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### THE IRISH TREATY

NO British statesman ever worked longer or more persistently for Irish Home Rule than Lloyd George. All through his political career he had identified himself with the cause of Ireland. It was the theme of the first speech he made, as a youth barely nineteen years old, in the Portmadoc Debating Society. Just four years later it drew him to Michael Davitt's platform, where he got his first direct encouragement to enter Parliament. No sooner did he get to Westminster than he made friends with the leaders of the Irish Party, and his correspondence files are packed with letters from them—Redmond, Devlin, T. P. O'Connor, Dillon, Plunkett, O'Brien, and every other figure of note among Irish politicians. He broke open the door for the passage of a Home Rule Bill through the House of Lords by his People's Budget and the Parliament Act to which it directly led. He spent himself freely in pushing the Home Rule Bill three times through the Commons till in 1914 it reached the Statute Book. After the Easter Rebellion he negotiated a settlement of the Irish question, which might have brought peace to Erin if it had not been carefully and systematically wrecked by English Tories. On becoming Premier he set up the Irish Convention, in which the Irish of all parties were invited to find their own solution of their problem, and eventually it was he who provided them with a solution acceptable to the majority—a solution again wrecked by the Tories among his Coalition supporters, who insisted on Irish conscription. Add the time and effort he gave in the four years that followed to passing fresh Home Rule legislation and negotiating endlessly with the Sinn Féin leaders, and the claim that he worked longer and harder for the Irish cause than any other leading British statesman can be clearly seen to be well established.

Yet Ireland contributed perhaps more than any other cause to his political downfall and to such reproach as may attach to his administrative record. His treaty with the Irish so alienated the Unionists among his supporters that they were ready to seize on the first good excuse to desert him. His responsibility for the policy of suppression of Irish rebellion through the Black-and-Tans and the Auxiliaries shocked Liberal opinion and remains a dark mark which his friends can recall only with sorrow and regret.

As Gladstone and many another had found before him, and as Arthur Griffith, Sir Horace Plunkett, Michael Collins and Erskine Childers were to experience in their turn, Lloyd George learned how disastrous a client

Ireland can be to those who take up her cause. The native Irish have always been a strangely undisciplined, incalculable folk; at their best, lovable, witty, mirthful, charmingly courteous, loyal and desperately brave; but retaining among some of them a black streak which turns to treachery, cruelty and a passion for underhand conspiracy. Giraldus Cambrensis wrote of them in 1187: "This race is inconstant, changeable, wily and cunning. It is an unstable race, stable only in its instability, faithful only in its unfaithfulness. . . . Their friendship is more to be feared than their firebrands."

The position which faced Lloyd George in 1919 was that the Home Rule Act was on the Statute Book, and though its coming into force had been postponed till the war was over it was due to take effect as soon as peace was declared, unless amending legislation were passed in the meantime. Yet it had been agreed before the war that in face of the intransigence of Ulster the Act could not be operated as it stood. Neither of the two amending schemes which he had put forward—in 1916 and 1918—had been accepted by all parties, and in any case the situation had changed very much for the worse since the Irish Convention was disbanded in the spring of 1918.

At that time it was still possible to regard the Irish Nationalists who followed Redmond as the responsible spokesmen of their country, although there was already a vast, concealed subsidence beneath their feet, and the various Republican movements—the Irish Republican Brotherhood or Fenians, Sinn Fein, and the Irish Volunteers—were rapidly winning over the Southern Irish to their ideals. The extent of their penetration showed itself at the General Election in December, 1918, when in Southern Ireland 73 Sinn Fein members were elected, and only 7 Irish Nationalists. The declared aim of Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein movement was the setting up in Ireland by peaceful means of an independent republic. Mere Home Rule was no longer the goal of Irish policy.

The Sinn Fein M.P.s refused to come to Westminster or take an oath of allegiance to His Majesty. Instead, they met in Dublin, forming themselves into an Irish Parliament, the Dail Eireann, which issued on 21st January, 1919, a Declaration of Irish Independence, and started to construct, independently of the English authorities, its own Irish Republican governmental machinery, with De Valera as the first President.

This went far beyond anything that Lloyd George had sought for Ireland when pressing for Irish Home Rule; and far beyond anything he was willing to concede. Critics who condemn the severe measures he presently took against Sinn Fein have expressed surprise that he, who was the champion of small nations and the foremost representative of another little Celtic people, should have been so unsympathetic to the

claims of the Irish. Yet his attitude was quite clear and consistent. He had started out as a Welsh Nationalist, demanding freedom for the Welsh to manage their own domestic affairs if they so chose, and was more than ready to uphold the same right for the Irish. But at the same time he recognized plainly that Wales, Scotland and Ireland formed a geographical and economic unity with England, and never for a moment had he contemplated for them anything more than a large measure of internal self-government within the framework of the United Kingdom. The claim of the Irish Republicans that theirs was a separate race and nation from the English left him cold; for he himself, coming from an intensely Welsh part of Wales, could make no less a claim. Ireland, indeed, had been brought into subjection to the English Crown long before Wales. Whatever dispersals of sovereignty might have been admissible in barbaric times, the British Isles were marked out under modern civilized conditions as essentially a unity for defence and economic viability. While he strongly advocated giving Ireland internal Home Rule, he was prepared to resist her secession from the United Kingdom as persistently as his hero, President Lincoln, had resisted a similar bid for secession by the Southern States of the U.S.A.

His views were clearly set out in a letter which he addressed on 13th August, 1921, to De Valera, where he said:

“ . . . But we must direct your attention to one point upon which you lay some emphasis and upon which no British Government can compromise—namely, the claim that we should acknowledge the right of Ireland to secede from her allegiance to the King. No such right can ever be acknowledged by us. The geographical propinquity of Ireland to the British Isles is a fundamental fact. The history of the two islands for many centuries, however it is read, is sufficient proof that their destinies are indissolubly linked. Ireland has sent members to the British Parliament for more than a hundred years. Many thousands of her people during all that time have enlisted freely and served gallantly in the Forces of the Crown. Great numbers, in all the Irish provinces, are profoundly attached to the Throne. These facts permit of one answer, and one only, to the claim that Britain should negotiate with Ireland as a separate and foreign Power.”

A second issue on which he was definitely opposed to the claims of the Sinn Feiners was the status of Ulster. He had made every possible effort to induce Ulster and Southern Ireland to accept some basis for unity within a Home Rule scheme, but he had come to realize that there was a real and deeply cleft division between them. They had no historic unity, even in the earliest times, and now there were differences of race, religion

and loyalties to accentuate the split. The Sinn Fein leaders took up the impossibly contradictory attitude—impossible except for an Irishman—that while they denied any intention of coercing Ulster into union with Southern Ireland, they refused to accept any settlement of the Irish issue which did not hold North and South together.

So the position confronting L.G. was this: he was under immediate compulsion to bring in a revised Home Rule measure to supersede the one already on the Statute Book. But in Southern Ireland the dominant party wanted not Home Rule, but an independent republic, and were in a state of organized rebellion against His Majesty's Government; while in Northern Ireland they did not even want Home Rule!

On 22nd December, 1919, he outlined to Parliament his proposals for new legislation. Two separate provincial parliaments were to be set up for the six counties of Ulster, and for the rest of Ireland respectively, with a joint Council of Ireland acting as a connecting link between them and as a foundation for a united government if in future both sides should agree to one. The provincial parliaments would have legislative authority in domestic matters, such as Education, Housing, Local Government, Agriculture, Transport, Police and Local Judiciary; but Foreign Affairs, Defence, Customs, Coinage and other matters affecting the British Isles as a whole, including the Crown Succession, were reserved to the Imperial Parliament.

Lloyd George made quite clear the basic principles on which he sought to erect this scheme of Irish settlement. The Irish, he said, had a right to control their own domestic concerns without interference from English, Scots or Welsh; but a considerable section of them were as much opposed to Irish rule as the rest were to English rule:

“In the north-east of Ireland we have a population—a fairly solid population, a homogeneous population—alien in race, alien in sympathy, alien in religion, alien in tradition, alien in outlook from the rest of the population of Ireland. It would be an outrage on the principle of self-government to place them under the rule of the remainder of the population.”

For this reason he was proposing two Home Rule Parliaments, for Northern and Southern Ireland respectively; but at the same time he emphasized that complete severance of Ireland from Great Britain would be a disaster to both islands. If in the war

“we had had there a land over whose harbours and inlets we had no control, you might have had a situation full of peril, that might very well have jeopardized the life of this country. The area of sub-

marine activity might have been extended beyond the limits of control, and Britain and her Allies might have been cut off from the Dominions and from the U.S.A. We cannot possibly run the risk of that; and it would be equally fatal for the interests of Ireland . . . I think it is right to say here, in face of the demands which have been put forward from Ireland with apparent authority, that any attempt at secession will be fought with the same determination, with the same resources, with the same resolve as the Northern States of America put into the fight against the Southern States."

The proposed settlement was embodied in the Government of Ireland Bill, which was introduced on 25th February, 1920, and received the Royal Assent on 23rd December. It crystallized the division of the six counties of Northern Ireland from the rest of the island, but otherwise it settled nothing, for De Valera and his Sinn Féin colleagues had no use for Home Rule. They considered themselves to have already severed all connection with the United Kingdom and to have set up an independent Republic in Ireland. The Irish Volunteers had now been transformed into the Irish Republican Army, and regarded themselves as at war with the alien Power—the British Government—which was still maintaining its administration and its military and police forces in Ireland.

The inevitable result of this situation was that during 1920 law and order sank and disappeared in the Irish bog. The I.R.A. was incapable of conducting open warfare with the Imperial forces, but concentrated on guerilla attacks, raiding of police barracks, shooting police and soldiers in the streets, beating up or killing persons known to be supporters of the British. Over extensive areas of the country it was impossible to conduct trials of people charged with criminal acts, even when they were arrested, for no one could be found to serve on a jury.

Lloyd George, who had laboured all his life to secure peace for Ireland, now found himself thrust into war with it; for while it takes two sides to make a peace, one side can start a war, and there was no other name for the hostilities launched against the British authorities by the Irish Republicans. On 2nd August, 1920, Sir Hamar Greenwood, the Irish Secretary, introduced a Coercion Bill, the Restoration of Order in Ireland Bill, which was rapidly pushed through Parliament and became law on 6th August. It provided for placing Ireland under martial law and trying offences by courts martial. The Royal Irish Constabulary were heavily reinforced with new recruits raised from among the British troops who were being demobilized now that the world war was over. These reinforcements continued to wear their military khaki with black police caps and belts and were nicknamed "Black-and-Tans".

They were fierce and effective fighters with plenty of experience, but

without much discipline and no schooling in police traditions as guardians of the peace. They did not long suffer the underhand, secret methods of killing practised by the I.R.A. before they turned to reprisals. To assist them, an auxiliary division of 1,500 ex-temporary officers was enrolled—men who had graduated in the bitter trench warfare of the Western front, and quickly learned the tricks of the savage, pitiless guerilla struggle which was being carried on in Ireland. The horrible brutalities which each side proceeded to inflict on the other, the tortures and mutilations and massacres, are unfit for description. They were started, it is true, by the Irish, among whom there has always been an element that has turned to plotting, treachery, ambush and callous murder. But the Black-and-Tans, and still more the Auxiliaries, were quick learners at this game, and bettered their instruction. If some were killed in an ambush, the survivors would return with reinforcements and destroy every dwelling in the neighbourhood, sometimes killing every man they could find. All Ireland was plunged into a blood-bath.

For some time the reports sent back to the British Government insisted that the I.R.A. were few in numbers and could quickly be suppressed. But suppression was not easy; for they had the general sympathy and support of most of the inhabitants of Southern Ireland, and the threat, not now of boycott, but of swift secret execution, kept the others from helping the British Government. They had no uniforms. Between operations they melted into the countryside or temporarily resumed civilian tasks.

Lloyd George's problem, it must be admitted, was one of extraordinary difficulty. As British Prime Minister he felt it his duty to retain Ireland as a part of the King's dominions in face of the efforts of a number of Irish rebels to split it off and make it an independent Republic. But the rounding up of those rebels was proving impracticable. Worse, it had been attempted as an expanded police operation instead of one purely military, and while the British troops in Ireland mostly maintained their discipline and behaved in an honourable and seemly manner, the police reinforcements and Auxiliaries swiftly degenerated into a shameless, brutal, drunken rabble, recklessly burning, looting, massacring, often without bothering to distinguish between the enemy and quite guiltless inhabitants.

Those in charge of them winked at their excesses, hoping that the end would justify the means, and that their savage reprisals would presently cow the Irish into subjection. Lloyd George himself disclaimed responsibility for their outrages, but he did not insist on the recall of the Black-and-Tans and the Auxiliaries, nor compel the abandonment of their policy of reprisals. It is true that at the time he was very much pre-occupied with the making of the post-war peace settlement; with con-

ferences and consultations about Greece and Poland and Russia; with a coal strike at home and other distractions. So when advisers assured him that the policy of the strong hand was the only possible one for Ireland, and was sure to win; that the reprisals practised were no more than the inevitable reaction to the abominations suffered by the police; and that steps were being taken to weed out those Auxiliaries guilty of criminal activities; and that any weakening would spell defeat for Britain; it was easy for him to agree to let events take their course, and to leave those in charge to carry on their task, hoping that what they were doing was for the best. In this attitude he had for a time the support of most people in England, who were indignant at the tale of murdered police and officers, and had no sympathy with Sinn Féin and its efforts to break away from the British Commonwealth.

By the summer of 1921 both sides, Irish and English, were coming to the end of their tether. The fighting numbers on the Irish side, which had been only 3,000 to start with, were sorely depleted, and the remnants of their I.R.A. were very short of arms and ammunition and were being harried into the hills so sternly that the end of their resistance appeared to be in sight. On the side of the British Government there was no shortage of troops. General Macready anticipated having 80,000 men under him in Ireland by July. There was no shortage of ammunition. But public opinion in Great Britain was horrified at the reports of the outrages committed by the Black-and-Tans, and was turning against the policy of coercion, as it became evident that the people to be coerced were not alone a few thousand Irish rebels, but the whole Irish nation. More disturbing still to Macready and the authorities at Dublin Castle, the British troops were revolting against the task of repression and reprisal imposed on them. Macready reported to the Cabinet in May that, unless the war could be finished off by October, all the troops and most of the Commanders and staffs would have to be changed.

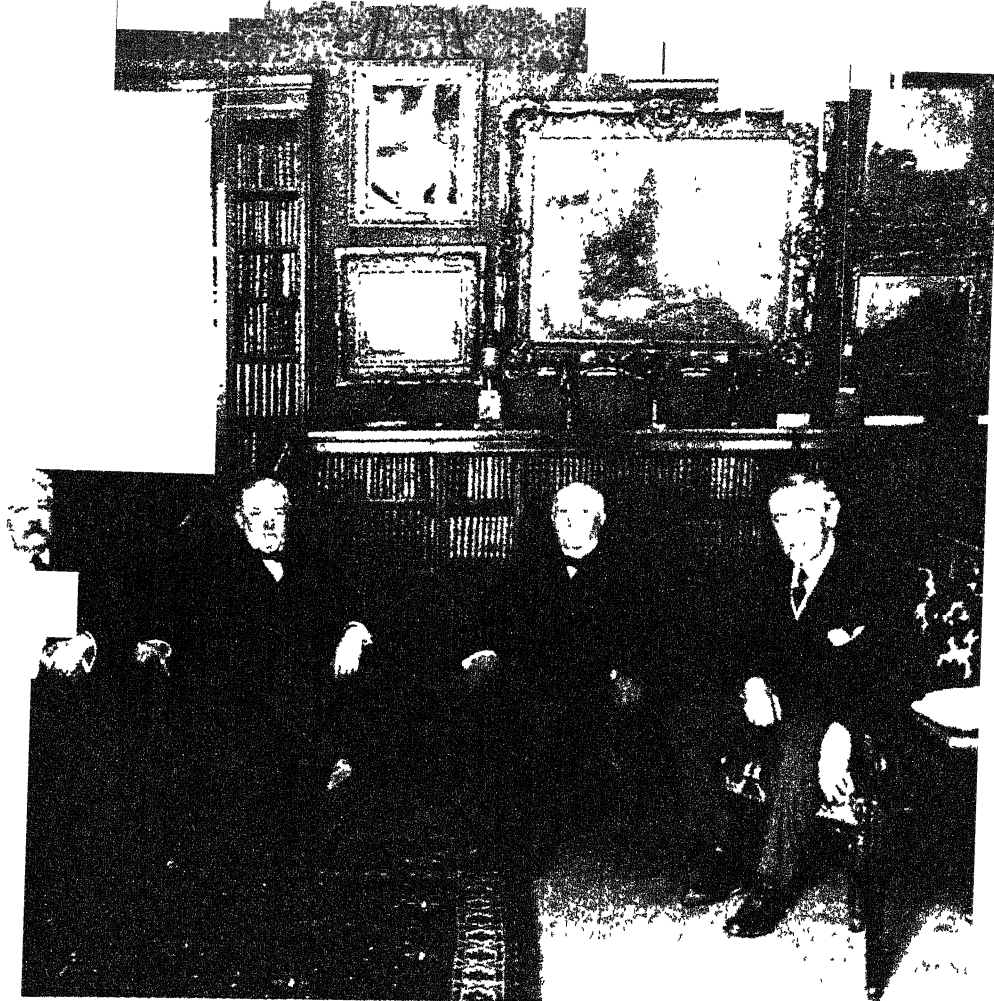
It was a curious end to a tragic story. For centuries England had stubbornly and uncomprehendingly maintained her rule over the Irish; maintained it through a garrison, through Dublin Castle, and through her allies the Protestant Anglo-Irish landowners—some of them, alas, absentee landlords—who looked on the Irish peasantry as an alien and inferior race, to be held under, coerced, harassed by penal laws, squeezed by rack rents and evicted at will. Irish history, which few Englishmen knew, was a deplorable record of injustice, oppression and hopeless rebellion. Gladstone began the modern emancipation of the country, disestablishing the Irish Church and giving the peasants the protection of land laws far more generous than anything yet enacted for English small tenant farmers. The ordinary Englishman in England had no wish to treat the Irish harshly, but tended blindly to accept the idea that a noisy

but unrepresentative gang of Fenians there tried to foster rebellion and assassination. When the process of compulsory subjection with all its implications stood revealed in the final orgy of coercion by Black-and-Tans, the English conscience revolted, just when the English power was in sight of victory. It was the English conscience, not the strength of the I.R.A., which won independence for Ireland.

Lloyd George had consented to the policy of suppressing the Irish rebellion when he understood it to be a rebellion fostered by a breakaway section of Irish politicians. The Irish leaders whom he knew were all Home Rulers, not Republicans. He acquiesced in its continuance, on through the winter of 1920-21, because his plate was so overloaded with other meat that he had no time to spare for tasting the Irish stew, and his advisers assured him that they were mastering the trouble. In the spring he turned his attention to the problem, and learned from other sources such as Lionel Curtis, an authority on international affairs, how general was the Southern Irish support for Sinn Fein. He recoiled, too, from the horrors of the reprisal policy which his henchmen had loosed on the Irish, and cast round for some way of opening negotiations to put an end to the civil war. He was ready to offer the Irish Dominion status, though this would infuriate the Tories who backed a war policy, but he was uncertain whether the Sinn Feiners would accept it if offered. He arranged for approaches to be made to De Valera in April, May and June through such people as Lord Derby, Sir James Craig and General Smuts, and eventually through Sir Alfred Cope, the Assistant Under-Secretary for Ireland.

On 22nd June, 1921, the King went to Belfast to open the first Parliament of Northern Ireland. In his speech he made an appeal to all Irishmen to put an end to their strife and join in making for their land a new era of peace, contentment and goodwill. Two days later, on 24th June, Lloyd George followed up this appeal by sending to De Valera an invitation to attend a Conference in London in company with Sir James Craig, the Ulster Premier, and to explore to the utmost the possibility of a settlement; and to bring with him for the purpose any colleagues whom he might select.

Couching the invitation in those terms was no easy concession on Lloyd George's part. He detested the campaign of assassination that had been carried on by the Irish gunmen—though they held it to be justifiable guerilla warfare—and had often declared that it would be unfitting for him to meet in conference any of those, such as Michael Collins, whom he regarded as murderers. But in face of the known desire of King George for a policy of reconciliation, and of the strong lead which His Majesty had given in his Belfast speech, L.G. agreed to set aside his personal feelings and meet any delegates the Sinn Feiners chose to send.



U. S. Orlando

*Woodrow Wilson*

Mr Lloyd George *Clemenceau*

[U.S. Office of Information]

### The Big Four

Signor Orlando

Mr. D. Lloyd George

M. Clemenceau

President Wilson



*[Photograph by Henri Mandel]*

With General Smuts at the Peace Conference

A talk with M. Briand



De Valera held a conference in Dublin to consider this invitation, and sent to Lloyd George asking for a truce as a precedent condition to discussion. The condition was accepted and the truce announced on 9th July, coming into force on the 11th; and on the following day De Valera left Dublin for London, accompanied by Arthur Griffith, Robert Barton, Austin Stack and Erskine Childers—all of them Ministers in the Sinn Féin Administration—and held a series of meetings with Lloyd George. On 20th July the British proposals for a settlement were handed to De Valera. They were an offer of Dominion Home Rule, and as the Sinn Féiners wanted nothing less than an independent republic, De Valera handed back the memorandum next day and returned to Ireland. His rejection was confirmed by his Cabinet and by the Irish Dail.

A lengthy correspondence followed. De Valera at first insisted that he could only continue negotiations if he were recognized as the mouthpiece of a sovereign State. Lloyd George as firmly refused to do business with him on those terms, saying:

"I must make it absolutely clear that His Majesty's Government cannot reconsider the position which I have stated to you. If we accepted conference with your delegates on a formal statement of the claim which you have reaffirmed, it would constitute an official recognition by His Majesty's Government of the severance of Ireland from the Empire and of its existence as an independent Republic. It would, moreover, entitle you to declare as of right acknowledged by us that in preference to association with the British Empire you would pursue a closer association by treaty with some other foreign Power. There is only one answer possible to such a claim as this."

Ultimately, however, Lloyd George proposed a way round this obstacle. He wrote to De Valera on 29th September:

"The position taken up by His Majesty's Government is fundamental to the existence of the British Empire, and they cannot alter it. My colleagues and I remain, however, keenly anxious to make, in co-operation with your delegates, another determined effort to explore every possibility of settlement by personal discussion. . . . We therefore send herewith a fresh invitation to a conference in London on October 11th, where we can meet your delegates as spokesmen of the people whom you represent, with a view to ascertaining how the association of Ireland with the community of nations known as the British Empire may best be reconciled with Irish national aspirations."

This invitation was skilfully worded so as to sidetrack the issue of the official status of the Irish representatives. De Valera could accept it with-

out renouncing his claim that Ireland was an independent republic, and Lloyd George could receive the Irishmen without admitting any such claim. At the same time, the invitation assumed that the aim of negotiations would be to retain the connection of Ireland with the British Empire.

De Valera decided against heading the delegation. He felt that he could more effectively reject any terms he regarded as unacceptable if he were aloof from the Conference where they were debated. As head of the delegation he appointed Arthur Griffith, who had founded the Sinn Féin movement as an organization to work for Irish independence by non-violent methods. Michael Collins, the very able guerilla leader, was sent against his will as second in command, and Duggan, Barton and Gavan Duffy completed the team, with Erskine Childers as their principal secretary. They were given plenipotentiary powers by the Dail, and brought with them proposals for amendment of the terms which Lloyd George had offered in July, including in particular a scheme for external association of Ireland with the British Commonwealth in place of the offered Dominion status.

The British team of negotiators was headed by Lloyd George, who had with him Austen Chamberlain, Lord Birkenhead, Winston Churchill, Sir L. Worthington Evans, Sir Gordon Hewart and Sir Hamar Greenwood, the Irish Secretary. Lionel Curtis and Tom Jones acted as secretaries.

Austen Chamberlain was now the leader of the Unionist Party, as on 17th March, 1921, Bonar Law had resigned for health reasons, writing to Lloyd George:

"I very much regret to have to inform you that I am no longer able to continue my political work. The strain of the last few years has pressed very heavily on me and, as indeed you know, I have for more than three years found it very difficult to do my work.

"Now I am quite worked out and my medical advisers have warned me that my physical condition is such that unless I have an immediate and long rest an early and complete breakdown is inevitable. In these circumstances I have no choice and I can assure you that it will always be a pleasure to me to think that I have been of some help to you in the great work which, after you became Prime Minister, you were able to do for your country, and that it is necessity alone which compels me to abandon the hope of being of any assistance in the very difficult task which now confronts you."

Austen Chamberlain had been elected four days later by the Unionist M.P.s as their leader in the House. It was a fact of no little dramatic interest that he, the son of Joseph Chamberlain, who had led the Liberal

## THE IRISH TREATY

Unionist breakaway in 1886 when Gladstone introduced the first Irish Home Rule Bill, should now sit beside Lloyd George, the Gladstonian Home Ruler, to negotiate with the Irish a treaty giving them far more than Joe Chamberlain had refused. Lord Birkenhead, too, was there, the former "Galloper Smith" who had aided Carson to organize Ulster's resistance to Home Rule. The whirligig of time had brought round a strange revenge.

The Conference started on 11th October, and through the weeks that followed there were a series of sessions, of sub-committees, and interminable interviews and personal discussions. The main issues were British defence and the position of Ulster. The Irish held that they were negotiating for all Ireland, and refused to recognize the partition set up by the 1920 Act. Lloyd George was not an enthusiast for partition, but refused to abandon Ulster. He agreed, however, to offer Ulster an All-Ireland Parliament, and alternatively set up a Boundary Commission to make as fair a boundary as possible between Northern and Southern Ireland. To this he got Griffith's consent. On 16th November the point was reached of presenting the Irish with the draft of a proposed treaty. On 22nd November they returned their reasoned reply, which was far from satisfying Lloyd George in regard to acceptance of Dominion status. But on 28th November in a conference at Chequers he discussed the question of allegiance to the Crown with Griffith and Duggan, and invited them to frame any words they liked to define for Ireland the same relationship to the Crown as existed for Canada; and offered to modify the terms of the Oath of Allegiance to meet Irish objections.

Both sides at the conference table were at this point in difficulty. The Irish delegation did not pull together well. The two leaders, Griffith and Collins, were acutely anxious to secure a settlement if any reasonable compromise would bring one. Griffith was a man of peace, and by no means a dyed-in-the-wool Republican. He had formerly advocated a dual monarchy, with an Ireland entirely independent of Great Britain standing as a sister realm under the British Crown. Collins, a man of deeds and a passionate lover of Ireland and the Irish, set small store by phrases and legal niceties. He cared little about the language in which a settlement was to be expressed, so long as it gave Ireland peace and practical independence, free from the rule of Dublin Castle. But the others, rather pushed into the background by the leaders, were suspicious that these would give things away, and were themselves far more doctrinaire and legalistic in their attitude. Erskine Childers especially, the Englishman who had become a Sinn Féiner, after starting out in life as a Committee Clerk in the House of Commons, was intellectually swaddled in red tape, and could not look beyond the documents. He suspected a trap in every formula, not realizing that the stage had been reached when Ireland could

have independence for the asking, provided that the face of British Commonwealth unity was not openly shamed, that the security of Great Britain in time of war was safeguarded, and that Ulster was not coerced; and since the Sinn Feiners' alternative proposals were designed in some sort to admit these objectives, though not doing so satisfactorily, there was little danger of the British Government setting a trap which would hold the Irish to bondage.

On the British side, Lloyd George was under the necessity of holding down throughout the negotiations the bitter antagonism of a large section of the Tory Party, which still wished to make no concession at all to Ireland, but to keep her in the old vassalage. These hostile Tories had the goodwill of Bonar Law, whose dislike of the prospect of being a party to a Home Rule settlement with Ireland had as much to do as his poor health with his decision to resign office. L.G.'s negotiations with Craig about the position of Ulster in a settlement were also very sticky. On 31st October Colonel Gretton moved in the Commons a resolution censuring the Government for negotiating with the Irish rebels. Lloyd George made a vigorous speech in reply, and the opposition crumbled. The motion was defeated by 439 to 43 votes. The attack was renewed at the Tory Party conference at Liverpool on 17th November, but was again defeated, partly through the pressure which Tory Ministers secretly brought to bear on certain leading Orangemen. None the less, the negotiations were decidedly unpopular with the bulk of the Party, which only acquiesced in them out of loyalty to their leaders.

On 1st December Lloyd George presented Griffith and Collins with a revised draft for a Treaty, incorporating the amendments agreed on at Chequers. With some further amendments, it was taken back to Ireland by the delegates. Despite Griffith's advocacy, the Irish Cabinet refused to accept it as it stood, but sent the delegates back to get fresh modifications in the Oath of Allegiance and the status of Ulster.

At first the renewed discussions broke down. But L.G. had a talk next day with Michael Collins which improved their mutual understanding, and Collins induced his colleagues to come back with him for a final attempt at agreement. At this meeting L.G. made further concessions, notably in regard to the wording of the Oath and the grant to Ireland of full fiscal autonomy; but having done so, he refused to allow the Irish to take back the Treaty to Dublin for further debate. He was under a pledge to Craig to let him know next day whether there was a settlement or not, in time for the opening of the Belfast Parliament. It had to be yes or no; peace or war. The Irishmen withdrew and debated the issue. In the end Griffith and Collins won over their colleagues, and after securing a few further verbal amendments of the Treaty terms all the five plenipotentiaries signed the document.

It was the end of a long and desperate diplomatic battle, into which both sides had flung all the energy and ingenuity they could command. There was little jubilation at the issue among the Irishmen, for they knew that extremists on their side would hold them to have made wrongful surrenders of principle. "I am signing my death warrant," said Michael Collins as he put his name to the Treaty, and he spoke truly: within nine months he was shot dead by his fellow-countrymen at Bandon, Co. Cork. The British side, too, had made surrenders which would have been thought impossible a few years earlier, and were even now regarded with disgust by a large body of Unionist opinion. It was indeed almost miraculous that so rational a solution should have been achieved to the problem of the irresistible force meeting an immovable object.

In the course of his political career Lloyd George was frequently cast for the role of a conciliator, and gained many notable triumphs through his sagacity and diplomacy in the handling of disputing parties. Never had he so thorny and unmanageable a task of conciliation as that involved in the Irish settlement, nor any in which the issues were so closely vital to the country he served and the political aims he had always advocated. Judged from those angles, the Irish Treaty was a supreme triumph of statesmanship. It gave Great Britain an honourable release from her dismal, centuries-long entanglement with the job of coercing Southern Ireland. It set the Irish free to rule themselves and to take to themselves any and every liberty they coveted. Even the nominal bounds set to their freedom in the Treaty would prove little more than formal, and in the years ahead Ireland was able to move on to as absolute an independence as she chose to exercise. Partition, it is true, remained; but since Eire has always denied any purpose to coerce Ulster into union with her, partition remains inevitable unless or until Ulster elects to join in with the southern part of the island, so protests against it are idle.

The credit for the achievement of the Treaty is supremely due to Lloyd George. Griffith and Collins showed remarkable courage and common sense in allowing him at the last to persuade them and their colleagues to accept a compromise on the issues of Dominion status, the Oath of Allegiance and the Ulster question; and Chamberlain and Birkenhead loyally supported him and held down the incipient revolt of the Tories—which either of them could easily have capitalized to his personal advantage. But, as Frank Pakenham (now Lord Pakenham), the Irish historian of the affair, admits, "when every tribute has been paid to loyal and brilliant support, the Treaty remains Lloyd George's individual creation. His the major credit for such settlement as it provided, his all the responsibility for the artifices by which it was achieved". "Lloyd George had seen the vision, and the Treaty will always, and rightly, be associated with his name."

As soon as, in the small hours of 6th December, the Irishmen's signatures had been appended, Lloyd George sent off a telegram to the King at Sandringham, saying:

"Glad to inform Your Majesty that, after very protracted discussions, at 2.30 o'clock this morning Articles of Agreement were signed between the British representatives and the Irish Delegation involving complete acceptance by Ireland of allegiance to the Throne and Membership of the Empire with all facilities demanded by the Admiralty for naval defence. Stop. Option given to Ulster. Stop. Full text of Articles of Agreement will be sent by special messenger. Stop. Humbly congratulate Your Majesty on the triumph of the famous Belfast Speech from the Throne.

"D. LLOYD GEORGE."

Shortly after 9 a.m. the King returned this answer:

"Am overjoyed to hear the splendid news you have just sent me I congratulate you with all my heart on the successful termination of these difficult and protracted negotiations which is due to the patient and conciliatory spirits which you have shown throughout I am indeed happy in some small way to have contributed by my speech in Belfast to this great achievement.

"GEORGE R.I."

The Treaty did not forthwith bring complete peace to Ireland. When the delegates returned to Dublin, De Valera and two more of the Irish Cabinet repudiated the action of their colleagues. A majority of the Dail supported Griffith and Collins, who proceeded to form a Provisional Government of the Irish Free State in order to frame an Irish constitution and carry the Treaty into effect. De Valera and his extremists, with the aid of a minority section of the Irish Republican Army which split off and supported them, launched a civil war against the Free State Government—the last and most miserable of all Ireland's bad times. During its course, houses and country mansions all over Ireland were burned down. The Four Courts in Dublin were occupied by the rebels, besieged and destroyed. Griffith, worn out, died of heart failure. Collins was assassinated. Childers, captured with arms in his possession by the Free State forces, was tried and executed. But by August 1922 the back of the rebellion was broken, and in the following March De Valera called a halt to it. An election was held in July, which returned a majority for the pro-Treaty party, now headed by Cosgrave, and Ireland settled down to the peaceful independence for which she had striven so long and so painfully.

## CHAPTER XIX

### INDUSTRIAL RECONSTRUCTION

A WORLD WAR leaves a very heavy aftermath of problems. For Lloyd George, the years from 1919 to 1922 were filled with a wide range of difficult tasks, international and domestic.

The peace treaties had to be hammered out. When they had eventually been signed, the job of getting them carried into effect and re-establishing effective international relations was far harder and more prolonged than the actual framing of the treaties. Ireland was a scene of confusion and tragedy, and it required herculean efforts to break through the political antagonisms on both sides of the Irish Sea and reach a peaceful settlement. India, too, was restless, and a programme of reform and progressive autonomy had to be framed and put into operation for her. At home the war had wrought revolutionary changes in the social and moral habits and outlook of the people. Social legislation which had been postponed during the war years now clamoured for enactment, and simultaneously the Government had to carry through the retransfer of the nation's manpower and industrial potential from the tasks of war to those of peace.

Lloyd George had, during these post-war years, to spend a good deal of his time on the Continent. It was of course inevitable that he should head the British delegation to the Paris Peace Conference, seeing that Clemenceau was leading the French contingent, and President Wilson himself appeared for the United States. The Peace Conference did not end with the signature of the Treaty of Versailles. Treaties had still to be negotiated with the other ex-enemy countries. On 10th September, 1919, the Treaty of St. Germain was signed with Austria, and that with Bulgaria at Neuilly on 27th November. The abortive Treaty of Sévres with Turkey was not signed until 10th August, 1920.

The discussions out of which these treaties emerged were, however, far from being the only ones which filled up the immediate post-war years. Conferences were incessantly being held about the operation of the treaties, the payment of reparations, the holding of plebiscites, the handling of frontier disputes. There were, for instance, conferences at San Remo in April 1920, and at Spa in July, largely about Turkish and German problems. In January 1921 Lloyd George attended a conference at the Quai d'Orsay in Paris, which was followed next month by another in London, to discuss the Turko-Greek conflict and German Reparations. These international preoccupations explain how it came about that, until the late spring of 1921, Lloyd George left one major problem—that of

Ireland—largely to the discretion of the responsible Minister, Hamar Greenwood, with disastrous consequences. The year 1922 saw the Cannes Conference and Lloyd George's supreme effort to set Europe on the road to peace, the Conference of Genoa—a gathering from which so much was hoped, so little resulted.

In these interminable conferences Lloyd George usually appeared in person for Britain. Sometimes this was inevitable, as he was the prime mover in arranging for the conference; or again, it might be in the nature of a meeting of the Supreme Council, where the Premiers of the Allied countries gathered in council. But in any case he usually felt it necessary to go himself, because the conferences, whatever their origin, involved tough debates on difficult matters such as reparation payments or the disputes between Greece and Italy, and a tough debater was needed to handle them. Balfour was the Foreign Secretary. He was a man of superb intellectual gifts, but without any great urge to practical action. His capacity for seeing both sides of a question was linked with a disinclination to decide in favour of either. An exponent of philosophic doubt, he was credited with the belief that any reforms which were really necessary or desirable would in due course press their way to the front and be enacted when the right time came by whatever party was in power. It was a comfortable excuse for inaction; but any farmer who tried to run a farm on that principle would have harvested nothing but weeds! For human progress depends, not on submitting to natural forces and instincts, but on mastering, directing and overruling them. So Lloyd George kept his own thumb on the post-war problems of foreign policy, instead of leaving the bulk of the work to his Foreign Secretary. He did, however, send Balfour to Washington at the end of 1921 to the Conference on Naval Disarmament, and there the statesman-philosopher achieved a notable success.

But if the settlement of world affairs made such heavy and continuous demands on the Prime Minister's time and attention, the problems of domestic reconstruction were no less urgent and critical. Foremost among them came the question of demobilization, which thrust itself forward clamorously as soon as the armistice had brought hostilities to an end. It was a prickly problem, and before long Lloyd George moved his friend and ally Winston Churchill from Munitions to the War Office to deal with it. Churchill quickly found that the War Office plan for giving preferential treatment to "pivotal men" was not workable, for these industrially valuable key men had been in the main the latest to be called up, and those with longer service flatly refused to take a place behind them in the queue. Men who were at home on leave would not go back to the Continent. Across the Channel a swarm of discontented troops gathered in Calais on the verge of mutiny, demanding to be sent

home. Churchill hastily devised a new demobilization scheme which gave priority to those with longest service and most wound-stripes. Thereby he succeeded in allaying the rising discontent, and within six months or so some three million men were returned to civilian life.

Three million men cascading back into the labour market at a time when industry was trying to switch over from wartime to peacetime work created an awkward situation. Numbers of them had been home for only a short time before they were wishing they had not been in such a hurry to get away from the Army. Now it was that Lloyd George's National Insurance Scheme demonstrated its value in such a fashion as to silence the last echoes of criticism. The Unemployment Insurance part of the Act had originally been applied experimentally to only a few industries. But it was now expanded in scope until it brought in every employed worker except domestics and farm labourers; and all the troops were classed as insured persons, and entitled to claim out-of-work benefit for up to six months after being demobilized. This provided them with a means of subsistence pending their resettlement in industry. Observers declared that the existence of this Insurance machinery saved the country from an outbreak of social unrest which might have changed to revolutionary violence.

It was no easy matter to get the wheels of British industry and world trade turning smoothly again. On the home front the war industries had to be wound up, and factories and works had to be reconverted to peacetime production. The munition-making machines had to be removed and equipment introduced for the manufacture of such things as hairpins and typewriters and fenders instead of cartridges and machine-guns and steel helmets. There was the allied problem of restoring a normal balance of labour distribution. During the war there had been an enormous expansion of the heavy industries and of engineering for the manufacture of weapons of war. The number of workers in them had increased by 323,000; while coal-mining had also acquired an additional 162,000 workers, and the chemical industry 65,000. There had been a corresponding drain away from unwarlike industries such as building, textiles and agriculture. As the earnings of munition workers had risen to far higher levels than were usual in the occupations from which they had been drawn, it was far from easy to induce them to return to their old trades.

The coal-mines and railways had during the war been run under close governmental control, and their future administration had to be settled. Housing was, of course, heavily in arrears. It had been suspended during the war years, and there had also been what in those days was regarded as a good deal of war damage to house property through air raids. Yet, while actual housing accommodation had deteriorated, the standard of housing comfort and amenity coveted by the workers and demanded on

their behalf by reformers was swiftly rising. When Lloyd George set as the post-war target the objective of making Britain "a land fit for heroes to live in" he was expressing a very general popular sentiment.

On the foreign front the Government was faced in its task of post-war reconstruction with the problem of recovering markets for British merchandise. Some of Britain's former customers, such as Germany, Austria and Russia, had been reduced to bankruptcy. France, Belgium and Italy were much straitened. Indeed, all Europe had been disorganized and impoverished by the conflict, and the old commercial connections had snapped. More distant markets in Asia, Africa and the Western world, where Britain had formerly sold her merchandise, had been cut off by the submarine campaign, and forced either to secure their needs from other sources or to manufacture for themselves. Britain's foreign trade was also hampered through her suspension of the gold standard. Up to 1914 the British pound was a gold sovereign. Well-to-do Britons carried round pocketsful of them. It was a coin intrinsically worth its nominal value anywhere in the world. But the post-war paper pound note was intrinsically worthless, and as a money token its purchasing power had fallen much below that of a gold sovereign. It did not give the foreigner the old confidence. The long-established function of the City of London as the world's exchange market had always been associated with the international value of the gold sovereign. It did not seem too easy to reorganize that market on the basis of a scrap of paper!

Lloyd George was, as always, fertile of ideas in dealing with these problems, and the legislation he managed to rush through his Coalition Parliament during the first two years of peace is evidence enough that while on some matters he may have been hampered or diverted by the predominantly Tory colour of his supporters, he was far from being their prisoner.

Beginning with the construction of machinery for efficient peacetime government, he set up in 1919 the Ministry of Health, to absorb the work of the old Local Government Board and administer the new legislation for social services. The Ministry of Transport was also established to supervise and improve the nation's transport services by road, rail and water; for Lloyd George had long seen clearly that transport was vital to trade and industry. Had he not brought in, ten years before, the Road Improvement Act and set up the Road Fund to reform the country's road transport system? He elevated the old Board of Agriculture into a Ministry, and increased its powers of dealing efficiently with agricultural matters. By the Forestry Act he set up the Forestry Commission to start the reafforestation of the countryside, whose woodlands had been sorely depleted by wartime fellings. The Electricity (Supply) Act established the Electricity Commission to reorganize the national supply of electric

power. A Royal Commission on the Coal-mining Industry (the Sankey Commission) was appointed to examine the nation's coal problems and make recommendations for the future of the industry.

In the sphere of social legislation, the year 1919 saw various measures to help the returning soldiers and extend the social services. Among them was an Act to facilitate the employment of disabled men, and one to promote land settlement and provide smallholdings for ex-soldiers. Dr. Addison's Housing, Town Planning, etc. Act made a most generous provision—indiscreetly generous, as it turned out—for the building of new dwellings by local authorities, and a second Act offered grants to private builders to encourage them also to erect houses. The Addison Act had the defect that it made the Exchequer contribute everything beyond the yield of a penny rate for the cost of the houses, thus removing from the executive authorities all incentive to economy. Dr. Addison plunged into the task of providing houses with a missionary fervour, sanctioning schemes everywhere without pausing to take stock of the available supplies of essential materials. Demands for these materials soon far outran supplies, and prices rose to prohibitive levels without effecting any corresponding acceleration in the output of houses. Lloyd George remonstrated. Addison stuck in his heels and refused to alter his methods. In the spring of 1921 Lloyd George made him a Minister without Portfolio and put Sir Alfred Mond in the Health Ministry. Addison resigned and impenitently protested that he would have abolished the slums if he had not been stopped.

One of the most serious handicaps to house-building by local authorities was the high cost of building land. By the Acquisition of Land (Assessment of Compensation) Act, 1919, L.G. laid down a basis for land purchase on fair terms by local authorities which in the course of the following decades must have saved the public many millions of pounds. Another measure, the Profiteering Act, which empowered the Board of Trade to proceed against people profiteering in articles of general use, did not result in a large number of prosecutions, but its existence on the Statute Book proved a strong deterrent to the practice of profiteering.

The year 1919 also saw the passing of the Government of India Act, framed to put into effect the Montagu-Chelmsford reform proposals for India, and start that great sub-continent on the road which would ultimately lead to Dominion self-government.

The expansion of overseas trade was encouraged by the grant of Government credits and insurance, and the Unemployment (Relief Works) Act gave extended powers of land acquisition for works of public utility, including new roads and road improvements.

All these measures formed an impressive body of reforms and reconstruction efforts, and testified to the advanced Liberalism which the

Prime Minister had instilled into his administration. The process was continued in the following year. The national insurance schemes for both health and unemployment were overhauled and extended. Pensions were provided for blind persons. An early closing Bill for shops was carried. Places of worship were given the right to enfranchise their freeholds. An Agriculture Act gave protection to tenant farmers, and much improved rights of compensation if evicted.

There was, however, one problem of domestic reconstruction to which Lloyd George's Government failed to reach a satisfactory solution. This was the problem of the coal-mines.

During the war, the mines had been taken under control by the Government. The need for coal for armament manufacture had led to a considerable increase in the mining force, and wage improvements had been made to attract men to the pits and keep them there. A big proportion of the coal raised had been for Government purposes, and if the Government incurred a financial loss, it was just part of the cost of the war. The price of coal to the public had been kept down.

With the end of the war the Government ceased to have the same urgent need to control the mines. The miners, however, wanted the Government to retain the mines and run them as a national concern. They did not wish to go back under the thumb of the mine-owners, who had acquired the reputation of being, as a body, the most reactionary and hard-fisted set of employers in the country. The miners also raised a claim, as soon as the war was over, for a 30% increase in wages, a six-hour day and full wages for demobilized and unemployed miners.

Lloyd George offered the miners a temporary wage increase and the Sankey Commission to examine the question of wages and the other issues that had been raised. The Commission included representatives of the coal-owners and the miners and also independent members, Mr. Justice Sankey being the chairman. L.G. promised that as a matter of urgency an interim report on wages would be issued by 20th March, 1919, and that the Government would regard the Commission as an arbitral body in this respect. He would also give full weight to its subsequent findings on the matter of the future of the industry. On the strength of these assurances, the miners postponed a strike which they had threatened.

There were three interim reports, one by the chairman and independent members, one by the owners and one by the miners. The chairman's report, which was accepted by the Government, recommended 2s. a day increase, a reduction of hours to seven from 16th July, and to six a year later if the industry could stand it, but passed no opinion on nationalization, though admitting that the industry ought to be unified by some means. Three months later, on 20th June, the Sankey

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Commission reported further with regard to the future organization of the industry. This time there were four reports: one by Sankey himself; one by the miners' representatives; one by the owners; and a fourth by one of the independent members, Sir Arthur Duckham.

Sankey's own report, supported with some qualifications by the miner's representatives, recommended nationalization of both ownership of minerals and of the mines; and a system of local, district and national Mining Councils through which the mines should be managed. The owners rejected nationalization of mining operations, but approved national ownership of the minerals and a unification of management by means of pit committees and district and national councils. Duckham also recommended national ownership of minerals but not of mines, and amalgamation of the colliery interests in each area by a District Coal Board, and the application of the 1*d.* per ton levy on all coal raised, which had been suggested in Sankey's interim report, to the provision of pit-head baths and other amenities.

The conclusions of the Cabinet were very much on the lines of the Duckham Report. Lloyd George did not think the time was ripe for full nationalization of the mines, though he agreed with the unanimous recommendation of all four reports that the minerals should become national property. Besides, there was not the smallest chance of enacting full nationalization, even if he had liked the idea. Tories and Liberals were united in opposing it. Nor had he ever pledged the Government to enact whatever the Sankey Commission recommended, apart from its conclusions on wages, where it had been appointed arbiter; and anyhow, no unanimous or nearly unanimous conclusion on the nationalization of the mines had been reached by the Commission. But the miners' leaders, who had somehow adopted the notion that the Government were bound to carry out whatever Sankey recommended, insisted on regarding Lloyd George's refusal to nationalize the mines as a breach of faith, and for years the charge was raised against him by Labour opponents.

Both the owners and Duckham had recommended the setting up of a Ministry of Mines, and in June 1920 a Government Bill was introduced to establish such a Ministry as a department of the Board of Trade. The miners opposed it as being a substitute for nationalization. In July they put forward demands for a further increase of wages and a reduction in the price of coal. But coal output was falling and the mines were threatening to show a heavy loss in place of their former profits, so Lloyd George invited the miners to go into the figures with the owners and arrange a rise of wages linked with increased output. This was rejected and on 18th October a coal strike began, to be settled ten days later on the basis of a temporary rise of 2*s.* and a sliding scale for wages to take effect in the new year.

During 1920 British commerce had enjoyed a temporary post-war boom, for the world had been starved since 1914 of British goods and there was a brisk sellers' market to be exploited. But the decline in coal output and its high price, and finally the disorganization of industry caused by the October strike, speeded up the collapse of the boom, and ominous signs of a slump began to appear. In April 1920 the total number of unemployed was under 360,000, many of them being newly demobilized men not yet settled back in a job. By January 1921 the number unemployed was over 1,000,000.

Worse was to come. Lloyd George had planned to end the Government control of the mines on or before 31st August, 1921. But their dwindling output and rising wage costs decided the Cabinet to terminate control on 31st March. As that date drew near, the owners and miners clashed on the terms for the future wages and control conditions of the industry, as well as over the nationalization issue, and on the appointed day a nation-wide coal strike began. Safety men were withdrawn from the mines, many of which were flooded and ruined. The miners tried to get their allies, the railway and transport workers, who were linked with them in a very powerful labour combination known as the Triple Alliance, to join them in the strike and turn it into something like a General Strike. But at the last minute these unions backed down, as the miners were refusing to negotiate on wages unless the owners agreed to make a national pool of mining profits from which to maintain wages. The coal strike dragged on until 28th June, slowing down the whole nation's industry. Before it ended, unemployment had risen to over 2,500,000.

Lloyd George had not waited for this calamity before taking action to deal with the menace of unemployment. In August 1920 he had set up a Cabinet Committee to devise means of tackling it. The Committee recommended large schemes of road improvement, including new arterial roads, and a sum of £3,000,000 was entrusted to a Committee under Lord St. Davids to be disbursed through the local authorities for relief works. The Unemployment (Relief Works) Act of December 1920 authorized the acquisition of land for works of public utility. Lloyd George now took further steps, and on 19th October, 1921, he announced a programme for tackling the unemployment problem, which included:

A grant of a further £300,000 (additional to £637,000 already voted) to assist the emigration of ex-service men.

Extension and improvement of the Export Credits scheme to stimulate overseas trade, with a 100% guarantee of the invoice. The cost was estimated at £26 million.

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Assistance within a maximum limit of £25 million for public enterprises such as railways and electrical undertakings at home or overseas through a Trade Facilities Bill.

A grant of £8 million for relief works, forestry and land drainage.

In addition to these steps to cure unemployment Lloyd George set up an Unemployment Workers' Dependents Fund, to pay allowances for the wives and children of the unemployed.

These measures were promptly put in hand. By their aid, unemployment was steadily brought down from the July 1921 level of 2.5 million to the figure of 1.3 million at which it stood in October 1922, when Lloyd George left office. Not only so; the nation's trade was revived and began to climb up again out of its post-war slump, and a programme of arterial roads was entered on which gradually transfigured the country's road transport system.

The tasks of international and domestic pacification and reconstruction which filled the immediate post-war years would have been a heavy burden on any government. They were especially onerous for Lloyd George, because to an exceptional degree he had personally to take charge of their handling.

He was in a curious position, for his political status was most insecure. He had often hankered after a Coalition, arguing that a very large field of national effort was common ground to all parties, and that if only the element of party polemics could be set aside, rapid progress could be made with the cultivation of fruitful projects by joint action. The notion of Coalition was not unfamiliar to him, for as a Liberal he was already a member of a party which was in fact a Coalition of diverse elements—Whigs and Radicals, brewers and prohibitionists, *laissez-faire* individualists and social reformers. Now he had realized his dream. He was the Liberal Premier in a Coalition; but the great bulk of his supporters belonged to the Tory Party and owed him no allegiance on which he could firmly rely. During the war that had mattered less, because the whole nation was united in a common purpose of winning the war.

In the main, the work of framing the peace terms after the fighting ceased had also been carried through without much interference of party bias. But the settlement of Ireland, the reform of Indian administration, the carrying forward of social legislation and the handling of domestic problems were all issues about which there were violent differences of party policy. He was himself the only uniting factor in the Coalition. Though he attained considerable success in winning the acquiescence of his principal Tory colleagues to his proposals, the Tory rank and file behind them followed not infrequently in sullen discontent. On some issues he had to swallow his own preferences, because if he pressed them

he would have provoked a rebellion. He could not hope to carry schemes for nationalizing the railways or the brewing industry, and he had to accept the repeal of the land taxes which had figured so prominently in his 1909 Budget.

Inevitably the situation resulted in a one-man Government. Lloyd George knew what he wanted to do. But most of the leading statesmen associated with him—Balfour, Chamberlain, Horne, Birkenhead, Derby, Curzon, Milner—had a different political tradition and outlook. He might win their agreement to his line of policy, but he could not expect them to choose or carry out that policy on their own initiative. So, to a far greater extent than any former Prime Minister for at least a century, he had personally to take charge of every important issue and work out every major plan of action. Indeed, the worst blot on his record occurred where he left a large discretion to a subordinate, the Liberal Secretary of State for Ireland.

During the war Lloyd George had been cast for a one-man role because he was unique among leading British statesmen in warlike initiative, driving force and unquenchable zeal for victory. In the following years of reconstruction he became still more of a dictator because the team he drove, brilliant as some of its members were, would have run off in different directions if they had been given their heads. It was not without good reason that Low, the cartoonist, used at that time with artistic discernment to portray the Coalition Government as a two-headed donkey uneasily driven by Lloyd George!

It was a time of great political confusion. The abler and more alert-minded Conservatives backed Lloyd George, knowing him to be the strongest leader the country had, and the man best able to steer a course through the shoals and quicksands of the immediate post-war period. The die-hard wing of the Party eyed him with sullen suspicion and with a traditional distrust of men who were clever and nimble-witted. The Liberal Party had broken up into three sections. The Coalition Liberals who followed Lloyd George had set up their own party organization, distinct from the Asquithians, who retained the old Liberal machine and the loyalty of most of the Constituency Liberal Associations; but it was never entirely clear whether the Coalitionists were or were not an integral part of the Liberal Party. A third group of Liberals had moved over to the Left—the "Lib-Labs"—and had thrown in their lot with the Labour Party. They included Josiah Wedgwood, Charles Trevelyan, Buxton, Ponsonby, Lees-Smith, Outhwaite and several other well-known Liberal figures. After his costly operation of the 1919 Housing Act had been checked by Lloyd George, Dr. (subsequently Lord) Addison resigned from the Coalition and joined this group.

The future party alignment of the country was not easy to forecast.



Low

[By courtesy of "The Star"]

The Argument: cartoon by Low



With King George V and the Mackintosh of Moy

Lloyd George himself was a figure with seemingly contradictory political affinities. He was an advanced Liberal and social reformer in domestic affairs, and, though never a theoretic Socialist, had strong sympathy with the workers and would have made a powerful leader of the Labour Party. He was closely akin to the Tories in Imperial and international matters. His patriotic sentiment removed him far from the ranks of the "Little Englanders". He had never been a tame party man, and party discipline irked him. For a time he got on very well with his Coalition, and toyed with the idea of making it permanent by effecting a definite fusion or at least a good working alliance of Liberals and Conservatives in opposition to the Socialists, whom he had long foreseen to be destined to emerge as the main party of the Left. Churchill, the Tory Democrat, who hankered after a Centre Party, strongly backed this idea, but the Coalition Liberals distrusted it. They did not trust the Tories, and most of them realized that if they lost the title of "Liberal" they would also lose their seats. The National Liberal Federation, speaking for the Asquithians, emphatically refused to enter into closer co-operation with the Tories.

A considerable section of the Conservative Party would have been very glad to assimilate Lloyd George—the ablest and most popular statesman in the country—and warm advances were made to him. In March 1920 Garvin openly asserted in the *Observer* that Lloyd George had crossed the Rubicon, and was now only waiting for his followers to come after him with the party baggage. In April 1921 Lord Derby publicly welcomed Lloyd George as "the newest recruit" to the Conservative Party. He declared that he had a genuine personal affection for L.G., and was "glad to think that he has found haven in the camp to which all of us have belonged from our babyhood". The *Spectator* suggested in alarm that Lloyd George was sucking the life-blood out of the Unionist Party, whose leaders were "so much under the spell of the Prime Minister that they must now be counted as Lloyd-Georgeites rather than as Unionists". It considered that it would be much more satisfactory if "Mr. Lloyd George and such of his followers as desired to do so entered the Unionist Party".

Lloyd George, however, though willing to consider the formation of some kind of Centre Party in which Liberals and progressive Tories could combine, was not disposed to let himself become the prisoner of the Tories. At the end of 1918 he had told a meeting of Liberals:

"From the old leaders of Liberalism I learnt my faith. Even if I had the desire I am too old now to change. I cannot leave Liberalism!"

He was well aware that the Tories did not consist only of men like Austen Chamberlain, Horne or Birkenhead. There was another Tory voice, whose tones were continually being broadcast by the *Morning Post*, with which his own utterances would have made violent discord. Its comment on Lord Derby's effort to recruit L.G. was:

"Before welcoming him as a new recruit to the Conservative Party we should like more satisfactory evidence of a conversion of heart. . . . You may take Radical policy and call it Conservatism, but the advantage and credit of Conservatism will not be enhanced thereby. Or you can take Mr. Lloyd George, and call him a Conservative, but who will believe you?"

It gave expression to the bitter hostility of many Tories to L.G.'s effort to reach a settlement with the Irish. "Mr. Lloyd George," it declared on 18th October, 1921,

"is not only giving away Ireland; he is giving away the Unionist Party. The Prime Minister has already destroyed one Party, the Liberal Party; he is now no less deliberately destroying the other. And his policy in this is plain. He desires that there be nothing left in politics but the Lloyd George Party on the one side, and the Socialists on the other."

Sentiments as unfriendly to Lloyd George appeared in letters to the Press from various prominent Unionists. Indeed, in the absence of firm party lines, political intrigue flourished exceedingly during the last years of the Coalition. Cabals formed and broke up. There were plots and treacheries in high places and even some of L.G.'s close allies in his Cabinet were willing to snatch at opportunities for dissident moves and independent action which might give them a position of leadership among some of the political sheep who were straying round, uncertain of their fold.

It was not easy for Lloyd George to keep his ear to the ground in order to detect all these seditious stirrings among his supporters, for he was so heavily engaged with urgent problems of state. One of his best means of keeping in touch with current intrigues was the golf course, and he would frequently get out to Walton Heath when he could manage a free hour or two, in company with one or more of his allies. His most constant partner was his neighbour Lord Riddell, the newspaper proprietor, who could bring him the latest gossip of Fleet Street—a highly well-informed quarter, where top-secret news which may hardly have

reached Whitehall or Downing Street is muttered from one to another among the editors and journalists gathered for a noon-day refresher in one of the famous hostelrys patronized by the Press.

Nor was Lloyd George restricted to the gossip he could collect on the Walton Heath course, where he and his cronies must often have annoyed other golfers by their habit of stopping on a green or tee or the middle of a fairway for a prolonged discussion. He sometimes at week-ends went off to Sir Philip Sassoon's house-parties at Trent Park, near Barnet, or at Lympne. But wherever he went, in England or to the Continent, he took care to have several intelligent and well-informed friends in a party with him. For Lloyd George was an excellent mixer, fond of the society of his friends, and no lover of solitude.

At the beginning of January 1921 Lord Lee of Fareham presented his mansion at Chequers to the nation as a permanent country house for the Prime Minister of the day. The presentation was formally made and the deed signed on 8th January, in the presence of a house-warming party which Lloyd George gathered there for the occasion. Dame Margaret Lloyd George was up in Wales but came down next day to inspect her new residence. She spent most of her time up at Criccieth among her own people, where she felt far more happy and at home than among the English folk whom her husband gathered round him. She was a cheerful, kindly, competent personality in her own chosen setting, with a pawky humour and a sturdy native common sense. But her real interests were in Caernarvonshire, where she became a Councillor and a Justice of the Peace and had a pleasant personal status and authority in addition to her distinction as the wife of Lloyd George, the most famous of all Welshmen. She was never quite reconciled to her husband's decision to be a politician, although she enjoyed her position as chatelaine of 10 Downing Street, where her simple dignity and complete lack of affectation assured her success with people of all ranks.

Chequers is a fine and well-appointed country mansion, and Lloyd George often went to stay there during the remainder of his time as Prime Minister. But he did not find it entirely congenial. It was, of course, never his own, and while he had learned in the course of his progress from the Llanystumdwy cottage to be unembarrassed in any setting, he did not feel himself comfortable and at ease in the unfamiliar elegance of the Buckinghamshire mansion. So he decided to look round for a new country seat. He had never cared much for the Walton Heath house, but he liked the Surrey countryside, especially where it was hilly. So when he learned of the sale of Lord Ashcombe's estate in Surrey he bought a tract of hilly land—mostly scrub-covered and derelict—near Churt, and set about the work of carving out a site for a house.

He was at the time (October 1921) in the throes of the Irish Treaty con-

troversy, the unemployment problem and the arrangements for the Washington Conference on naval disarmament, to which Lord Balfour was going as head of the British delegation. But he characteristically managed to detach enough attention at snatched moments to arrange for the work to be pushed along, and the building of his new home of Bron-y-de ("Breast of the South") was started in February 1922. By the early summer the work was far enough advanced for the house to be occupied, though the grounds out of which a garden was to be carved were still a wilderness. Unlike his Criccieth home, Brynawelon, which was built to no small extent in conformity with the wishes of his wife, Bron-y-de was definitely Lloyd George's own place, designed and laid out to suit his taste. At Churt, in the years ahead, Lloyd George was most at home, and undisputed master. At Brynawelon, Dame Margaret was mistress, and Lloyd George more like a visitor when he went up there to stay for a time.

The political difficulties which thickened around him as time went on caused Lloyd George now and again to talk of resigning; but resignation was not a part of his character. An alternative suggestion was to dissolve Parliament, now that the peace treaties had been drafted and signed, and seek a new mandate from the country. But here the difficulty was that he could not rely on holding the Tories and his own wing of the Liberals together. At the end of 1921 his Coalition Tory allies suggested an early election in the hope of swinging their party along on the Coalition platform for a further term; but the party organizers viewed the notion with chilly dislike. A note prepared by McCurdy, the Coalition Liberal Whip, about the party alignment on which an election might be fought, was shown to Sir George Younger, the chief Tory organizer, who proceeded to give public expression to his criticisms. Lloyd George complained bitterly about this in a letter which he wrote from Cannes to Austen Chamberlain on 10th January, 1922. He remarked about Younger's conduct:

"Younger has, in my judgment, behaved disgracefully. He was consulted confidentially on a most confidential subject. He was shown a document prepared by the Chief Coalition Liberal Whip. When you informed me that you meant to send a copy to him I certainly relied that, as a man of honour, he would not reveal it. He has rushed to the Press; carried on an active campaign; disclosed the most intimate and secret information which would never have been imparted to him unless we had depended upon his being gentleman enough to keep counsel. His action has caused serious damage which it will be difficult to repair. His suggestion that the General Election is a Coalition Liberal stunt is absolutely untrue. The suggestion came, in the first instance, as you are aware, from Unionist

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quarters. Prominent Unionists were the first to urge it upon us, and McCurdy only came in when I consulted him upon the idea which had been pressed upon me notably by F. E."

But the sapping and mining went on. Birkenhead lamented on 1st February that the Coalition was constantly being denounced in the Press. Younger kept up his attacks, insisting that the Coalition must not be continued through another election. Co-operation he would accept, but alliance between Tories and Liberals he would not have; and he called for "a Bill of Divorcement".

Lloyd George, who was by now feeling very much the strain of the strenuous years through which he had guided the country, decided that in face of this growing dissension it would probably be best for the Premiership to be taken over by a Conservative who would command the full loyalty of the Tory wing of the Coalition, which now seemed to be splintering. If Lloyd George had not fully completed the tasks of peace-making and domestic reconstruction he had set out to accomplish, he had done most of them; and office for its own sake had no appeal to him. Titles, dignities and prestige of position were not the objects of his ambition. So on 27th February, 1922, he sent to Austen Chamberlain, the leader of the Tories, a letter which he had for some time been considering. After referring to the need for national stability in face of the post-war problems, he said:

"I had a feeling at the beginning of this year that the Coalition were gradually working through these troubles and that in another year this would be obvious to the eyes of all observers. The financial position of the country, as a result of the sound policy maintained, as you know, against much temptation which overcame governments and business men in other lands, is better than that of any other State in Europe. Britain has recovered her old supremacy in this vital respect. Sterling has risen steadily under its burdens and is carrying them erect through the money markets of the world. . . . We are also gradually succeeding in our efforts to settle the International questions between the East and West which vex peace and prevent the world settling down to business. . . .

"In spite of much fractious criticism, until recently the nation was sustaining the Coalition in its efforts. There were electoral mishaps here and there, inevitable with such a majority as ours, and such depressing conditions to disaffect the electorate, but there were surprisingly few considering the state of the world and the persistent misrepresentations with which we were assailed. So firm was the political position that when two months ago there was some talk of a

General Election our opponents of one accord showed unmistakable signs of alarm. It is not too much to say that the thought of having to invite the national verdict on their attacks caused panic amongst our critics. In a few weeks there has been a complete change of the position for the worse. The impairment is not due to any mistake in policy or action on the part of the Government. It is attributable to a series of unfortunate activities on the part of some who are reckoned our supporters—and here I do not seek to discriminate or apportion blame—which has been responsible for lowering the credit and prestige of the Government. The control has been ostentatiously taken out of our hands by men who have no responsibility for the effects of judgment. There is an appearance of our having been overridden in an important question of policy by bluster and menace from outside; in fact, the Government have been put into the position that we have always predicted would be the fate of Labour Governments—that they would not be allowed to decide great national issues according to counsel, but would be compelled to act in obedience to dictation from irresponsible outsiders. The whole future of the Coalition, the relation which its component parts bear to one another, and the policy which it is to carry out, have been determined without even the formality of consultation among the Leaders, and the new policy is proclaimed for the first time by men of no authority, but who would, nevertheless, arrogate to themselves dictatorship.

“This is a condition of things which is quite inconsistent with the self-respect which the nation expects from its public men. The consequence was inevitable in a highly trained and susceptible democracy like ours. The Coalition has lost more ground in public favour than at any previous stage in its career, and that, I claim, through no fault of its Leaders.

“I have been driven to the conclusion that I cannot any longer render useful service to my country by retaining office under existing conditions. I am conscious of the tremendous difficulties with which Governments are confronted at this hour. Were it not for that fact I should have insisted on resigning long ago, but I was anxious not to rest under the imputation of running away from trouble. I never sought my present position; as you are aware, I was ready to serve under Mr. Balfour or Mr. Bonar Law during the crisis of the war. In fact, I urged that one or other of them should form a National Government. They decided otherwise, and I undertook to form a Government under pressure from them. I have always felt the anomaly of holding the first position in a Government, the majority of whose supporters belonged to another Party, although I must at once say that I have never been thwarted in my action through any lack of

support on the part of the Unionist supporters of the Government. They have always treated me with a loyalty which I shall never forget. I have, nevertheless, felt for some time that it would have been wiser for the Unionists to form their own Administration and for my supporters and myself to give them independent support in the carrying out of the policy upon which we were agreed. I have repeatedly offered Mr. Bonar Law, and I renewed the offer to you when you succeeded him, to go out and give independent and loyal support to a Government formed by either of you to carry out the policy upon which I knew we were in complete agreement. I suggest in all sincerity to you that the time has come for you to accept that offer.

"No man can hope successfully to assist in handling such a baffling world situation as that which we witnessed unless the support on which he relies is confident and continuous. . . . We can observe for ourselves how much other countries suffer from the instability of Governments based on shifting and incoherent groups. It has created uncertainty, hesitation and delay in the settlement of Europe. Constant changes in the Government of leading nations mean constant changes, if not in policy, at least in attitude. Much valuable time is lost in adapting old decisions to the opinions of new men, and when the adaptation is complete, new governments again supervene. Europe is perplexed, bewildered, and feels lost amongst all these changes. These uncertainties and delays are hindering the recovery of the world and all nations suffer, some more, some less, but all acutely. If Britain also lapses into that condition of changeability, not only will our own country suffer in prestige and power, but Europe will lose the undoubted advantage of having one great country in its councils which possesses a stable Government.

"So much am I impressed with the importance of securing this end that I urge you to agree to my freedom so that you may be in a position to form a homogeneous Government. I shall, of course, continue to sustain to the best of my ability, those causes for which we have worked in common. I shall give cordial support to a Government that undertakes to carry through the Treaty with Ireland and that devotes itself to the work of the pacification of the world. . . ."

Austen Chamberlain declined the offered throne. Lloyd George's offer to him was entirely sincere; he would have been very ready to step down and enjoy a spell of freedom from responsibility, while remaining in alliance with the Government and in a position to tender advice or caution. But Chamberlain would not dream of ousting his leader, with whose conduct of affairs he did not disagree. There were some members

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of the Cabinet in whom the uncertainty of the prospect when the Coalition ended bred feelings of mutual distrust that led them, not indeed to be intentionally treacherous to their colleagues, but to look for chances to play for their own hand. But if some were less scrupulous or more pre-occupied with their personal prospects, it must be said for Austen Chamberlain that to the end he was consistently honourable and loyal in his relations with Lloyd George. They had incidental misunderstandings, but no major division, up to the end of the Coalition Government.

## CHAPTER XX

### PEACE UNFINISHED

DURING the four years of his Premiership after the armistice was signed with Germany, Lloyd George worked tirelessly to establish a real peace. The task was only begun when peace treaties had been drawn up and signed. Unless the terms of those treaties could be put into practice, the documents would remain scraps of paper.

There were troubles enough waiting to trap the feet of the peace-maker. But four issues were of especial difficulty. These were the relations of the rest of the world with Russia; the exaction of reparations from Germany; the Turkish settlement; and the nurture of that tender infant, the League of Nations. If Lloyd George did not attain success in his efforts to deal with these problems, those who came after him failed in some respects even more calamitously. The Turkish situation, it is true, was eventually allowed to reach a solution which was in violent opposition to the original plan of the Allies. But the Russian problem is still unsolved; and German Reparations and the League of Nations have both been cast upon the rubbish dump where the broken potsherds of diplomatic failures are abandoned.

At the time of the armistice, Russia was an unsolved enigma. The Bolsheviks ruled the centre. The Ukraine was an independent state. "White" Russian armies under Koltchak and Denikin had maintained the fight with Germany after the Bolsheviks under Lenin and Trotsky had signed the peace of Brest-Litovsk; and were also contesting with the Bolsheviks the government of Russia. As allies of the Western Powers they were drawing arms and financial aid from Britain, and there were small British forces at Archangel and in the Caucasus. It was at first hard to say whether the "Whites" or the "Reds" would eventually come to the top, and among the Allies opinions were very divided as to whether efforts should be made to keep up their help to Denikin and Koltchak. Churchill was most anxious to give them full military assistance, and would have liked to send—or take—an army to Russia to fight the Reds. Lloyd George firmly opposed such action. Like Churchill, he disapproved of the Bolsheviks, but as a sound democrat he held that it was for the Russians themselves to decide whether they wished for a Communist system or not. It was one thing to intervene in Russia to help Russians to keep out the Germans. It was quite another thing to interfere with the right of the Russians to choose their own form of government. With his knack of being able to see rather further through

a brick wall than those about him, Lloyd George had an intuition that Lenin would win, for if the Russians were not ardent Communists they did not want any return to the recently overthrown tyranny of Czarist days, which Koltchak wanted to restore.

Events proved him right. Although the Supreme Council of the Allies sanctioned financial aid to the Whites, and Churchill poured out munitions and credits to them, Koltchak and Denikin soon collapsed, and the British garrisons at Murmansk and Archangel were withdrawn.

Lloyd George realized that there could be no settled peace in Europe if Russia remained outside, and he wanted to bring her into conference at Paris. But the Supreme Council did not support him. Whom were they to ask to represent Russia? There were members of the former Czarist Government in Paris. There were the White Russian generals and the Bolsheviks. With these last, Clemenceau refused to hold parley. Eventually an invitation was issued to all the conflicting groups of Russians to come to a joint conference on the islands in the Sea of Marmora in the hope of patching up their quarrels and reaching agreement about Russia's future. But this scheme failed. The Russians declined the invitation. The peace treaties had to be framed without Russian collaboration.

The only peace settlement between Russia and Germany had been the savage treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which practically reduced Russia to the status of a subject province. The Allied victory had of course nullified that outrage, but Lloyd George was convinced of the necessity of bringing Russia into the concert of Europe again. In May 1920 he received Krassin as a trade emissary of the Soviet Government, and on 30th June sent through Krassin a note offering terms for a general armistice and the opening of trade relations. When these were accepted, he put forward a further proposal with a view to settling the conflict then in progress between Russia and Poland, inviting Russia, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Finland to send their representatives to London to negotiate peace. This came to nought, for after the Russians had gained successes which brought them almost to Warsaw, the Poles rallied and more than reversed the situation.

In March 1921 a trade agreement was concluded with Soviet Russia. Lloyd George explained to the Commons that it was based on recognition of the Soviet Government as the *de facto* Government of Russia, which it unquestioningly was. The English have traditionally held themselves entitled to trade with anyone, however repugnant his politics or morals—with the Turkey of Abdul the Damned, with Czarist Russia, with Tippoo Sahib or the King of the Cannibal Islands! But it was not easy to deal with the Bolsheviks. Kameneff, the head of the Soviet Mission, only saved himself from being turned out of England by Lloyd George in

September 1920 by going of his own accord, after it was found out that he had been selling the Russian Imperial jewels and using the proceeds to subsidize the *Daily Herald*, and carrying on secret propaganda and anti-Government intrigue. On 17th September, 1921, a Note was sent to the Soviet Government charging it with breaches of the trade agreement and hostile intrigues in India, Persia and Afghanistan.

These little unpleasantnesses in no wise altered Lloyd George's desire to find some way of bridging the chasm between Russia and Western Europe. The most serious difficulty to be dealt with was the problem of Russia's debts. Her pre-war governments had borrowed extensively, and their loans had been largely subscribed by France and Britain. The Allied Governments had heavily financed the Russian war effort prior to the Revolution; and the Bolsheviks had confiscated British and French industrial concerns in Russia, and the properties of Allied nationals. It was held by the Allies, and especially by the French, with their logical, legalistic habit of mind, that an essential preliminary to reinstatement of Russia as a good neighbour, with whom diplomatic and commercial relations could be resumed, must be the acknowledgment by the Soviet Government of her financial liability for these debts and the acceptance of some arrangement for their payment.

In the hope of reaching a settlement of this and other international problems which prevented the full re-establishment of European peace, Lloyd George arranged a meeting of the Supreme Council at Cannes in January 1922, to lay plans for a general conference of all European nations in April at Genoa; a conference where all would meet on equal terms, including Russia and Germany, to reach an understanding upon all issues which divided them.

The Cannes meeting was duly held, lasting from 6th to 13th January, 1922. Lloyd George laid before it a series of resolutions which were adopted, declaring that an essential of international security was the recognition by states of all public debts and obligations incurred by their governments, municipalities and other public bodies, and their duty to compensate foreign interests for loss or damage through confiscation; establishment of a legal system to enforce commercial contracts; creation of reliable means of exchange; and cessation of hostile propaganda against their neighbours or acts of aggression. Official recognition of the Soviet Government was to be conditional upon her acceptance of these stipulations.

The Cannes Conference was making good progress when an incident occurred which landed it in tragi-comic disaster. For once Lloyd George's keen intuitive sense of popular psychology failed him, and he made a blunder that had far-reaching consequences of calamity. He was enjoying his golf in the Riviera sunshine; and as he had certain matters which he

wanted to discuss informally with Briand, the French Premier, and Bonomi, the Italian, he conceived the schoolboy jest of challenging them to a round of golf—neither of them had ever had a club in his hands—and working in the desired discussion under cover of the match. Carried away by L.G.'s high spirits, the two Premiers allowed themselves to be inveigled into playing. The game was a roaring farce that gave side-splitting delight to the spectators. But the French politicians who read about it next day in the Paris Press were not amused. Their Premier, who should have been thinking of nothing but France, had been wasting his time making a zany of himself on the golf course—clearly hypnotized by the untrustworthy Welsh wizard! A storm blew up against him in the French Chamber, and when he hurried back from Cannes to quell it he failed. The news of his resignation broke up the Conference. He was succeeded by the stiff, cold, humourless and suspicious Poincaré. There were no more inter-Premier games of golf, nor any more cordial Anglo-French relations between the statesmen at the top. The Cannes golf course was to prove an expensive luxury for Europe.

Among the matters which Lloyd George had intended to settle with Briand at Cannes were the terms of a Franco-British Treaty of Alliance, under which Britain would give France a guarantee of full naval and military support in the event of any future aggression by Germany. On his way back from the Conference L.G. met Poincaré in Paris, and tried to discuss this with him. But Poincaré was very cagey and suspicious, scarcely attempting to veil his conviction that the British offer was not made in good faith. He had no use for a guarantee unless it specified in set terms just how many divisions, what artillery, which naval craft would be sent to aid the French. On such terms, business was impossible. The British do not measure out their military contribution by the penny-weight when their word is pledged or their honour and national interests are involved in a struggle. The offer of a guarantee Treaty lapsed.

The Genoa Conference, Lloyd George's last great bid to secure a settlement of European affairs, duly opened on 10th April, 1922, and ran on for nearly six weeks. Russian and German delegations attended, but the early discussions with the French as to the status to be allowed to these dubious elements were acrimonious and unprogressive. From the outset the Conference broke up into four Sub-Commissions charged with examination of Political, Financial, Commercial and Transport problems. A good deal of preparatory work had been done in London to simplify the tasks of the Conference. Lloyd George hoped greatly to get some really constructive results from it, and had done what he could to prepare the foundations.

It was a vain hope. The Genoa Conference was doomed before it started. Poincaré declined to come to it, and sent Barthou as his repre-

sentative to head the French delegation. Barthou knew his role as Poincaré's stooge, and played the game of obstruction with stubborn persistence. He would agree to nothing positive without prior reference to his chief; and Poincaré, who all along was antagonistic to Genoa, was unwilling to authorize any decision of a progressive nature. The Conference was no less doomed in its objective of reaching a good understanding with Soviet Russia. Those who knew the Russian mind better than Lloyd George had warned him that Lenin was entirely irreconcilable. He might make a show of agreeing to something but would never be held by any pledge or undertaking given to capitalist governments. Knowing that the Allies intended to present him with a bill, he was making up a counterclaim that would exceed theirs, and even if he could be persuaded to admit any liability, he would find ways of avoiding actual settlement. Lloyd George refused to listen to these Cassandra counsellors. He wanted so badly to get constructive results at Genoa that he indulged in wishful thinking, and persuaded himself that the Bolsheviks were experiencing a change of heart, and could be persuaded to become good Europeans.

He got a rude awakening. The Genoa Conference had not quite completed its first week when it was torpedoed by the Russian and German delegations, who secretly came together and signed a treaty whereby they accorded each other *de jure* recognition, resumed diplomatic and consular relations and mutual trade, and cancelled all claims for compensation. Had this treaty been paralleled by similar treaties with the other countries present at the Conference, it would of course have been highly laudable. But as a bargain entered into by the two states who were viewed by the others as culprits, awaiting sentence and discipline, it was regarded as an act of treachery and outrageous impertinence; especially as Germany's renunciation of all claims against Russia was explicitly subject to the proviso that Russia should not pay any other claimant.

Though the Genoa Conference dragged on for five weeks more, it undeniably ended in failure. Various resolutions were adopted, including one for a short-term pact of non-aggression—to which neither France, Belgium, nor Germany were partners. Nothing definite was settled about Russian debts, which were left for examination by a mixed Commission of experts, meeting in June at the Hague. This Hague Conference was duly held and ran for five weeks, but broke up without agreement having been reached. The Bolshevik Government persisted in refusing to accept liability for the debts of Czarist Russia.

If Lloyd George failed to coax Russia back into the European family, he was no more successful in his efforts to get the matter of Germany's reparation liabilities placed on a sound footing.

At Versailles he had found it impossible to fix the total amount which

Germany should be expected to pay. While the British Treasury estimated her capacity at £2,000 million, and Keynes held this to be an outside figure in his *Economic Consequences of the Peace*, the French Finance Minister, Klotz, put the claims of France alone, in respect of reconstruction costs in her devastated region, at £5,360 million. (The actual cost of reconstruction to a distinctly higher standard than that of the destroyed property was only £860 million.) Lloyd George was one of the few people who realized the dilemma of continuous reparation payments across the German frontier: the fact that if the Germans were forced or encouraged to produce and export on a scale that would give them a huge credit balance in external trade with which to pay reparations, it would be at the cost of making Germany an immensely formidable industrial country and spreading unemployment and industrial stagnation in the countries drawing their tribute from her, whose markets she would be monopolizing. If, on the other hand, she was stripped of all transferable assets, of cattle, rolling stock, industrial plant and factory equipment, and of her overseas commercial, financial and industrial undertakings, her earning capacity would be destroyed and there would be no more golden eggs for the victors.

In the years that followed these truths began slowly to penetrate even the resistant skulls of bankers and economists, such as those who, in 1918, cheerfully estimated that Germany could be made to pay a tribute of £1,200 million a year. Today very many people have grown somewhat wiser to the real facts of international exchange transactions and the limitations on the capacity of a defeated nation to pay indemnities—especially here in Britain, where, after hearing suggestions that this time the affair would be better managed, and really substantial wealth extracted from Germany, we found ourselves compelled to search our own nearly empty trousers pockets for £40 million a year in order to keep our enemy from starving! But after the First World War it was widely held in Britain, and fiercely proclaimed in France, that only Germany's incurable wickedness of disposition robbed the victors of the indemnities justly due to them.

Lloyd George had managed to get a provision inserted in the Versailles Treaty postponing, until after 1st May, 1921, any ultimate decision by the Reparation Commission as to the amounts and methods of payment to be required from Germany. This Commission was to consist of five members, representing the United States, the British Empire, France, Italy and Belgium. The Americans and British together, though they could not outvote the others, would have exercised very considerable influence on the Commission's decisions.

But at the end of 1920 the United States Senate decided not to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, nor to join the League of Nations or take part in the

Reparation Commission. Lloyd George was left alone to struggle against the grim determination of the French statesmen to squeeze reparations out of Germany and to cripple her as much as possible. Their vindictiveness had a genuine excuse, which 20 years later would be far more widely recognized, though it may be arguable that their treatment of Germany from 1919 onward led all too inexorably to the renewal of war and of French agony in 1939. Certainly Lloyd George did not share the French desire for a Carthaginian crushing of Germany, and his own instincts were all towards making friends with his opponent, once the fight was over. He wished to set the world again in the paths of peace, and there could be no real peace while one nation was squeezing another remorselessly and threatening her with penal sanctions.

So while Germany was theoretically liable to be called on to pay whatever astronomical total sum the Allies chose to set as the value of their war damage and loss, Lloyd George tried in the years following Versailles to get a figure fixed for her actual payments which would be realistic and not theoretical. A Conference on Reparations, held at Boulogne in June 1920, proposed annual payments by Germany which would rise from the level of £150 million in 1921 to £300 million in 1926, and £350 million a year from 1931 to 1963. This was fantastic; but at the Paris Conference in January 1921 a scarcely less grotesque scale was set out. Starting in 1921 with annual payments of £100 million, and rising by an additional £50 million a year every three years till the annual payments were at the £300 million level, Germany was to pay a cumulative total of over eleven thousand million pounds, plus a 12% levy on the value of her exports during 42 years.

In April 1921 the German Government offered to fix her capital liability at £2,500 million, to be paid off with interest by instalments, the cumulative total amounting to £10,000 million. The Reparation Commission proposed, three days later, a capital liability of £6,600 million, and annual payments of £100 million plus 26% levy on exports. (These values are in terms of the pre-1914 gold sovereign.)

Nothing like these sums could ever be continuously secured. Immediately before the war Germany used to have an adverse balance of trade, and, as Lloyd George tried to show his French colleagues, she could only build up so immense an export trade surplus if France, Britain, Belgium, Italy and her other neighbours all agreed to buy great quantities of goods from her and sell little or nothing to her, thus ruining their own industries; and even so, the plan would not work unless Germany could procure a sufficiency of imports of raw materials and food at give-away prices for the maintenance of her production.

Germany failed to pay what was demanded, and the Allies, angered by her failure and convinced that it was wilful, turned to sanctions. They

were probably right in judging that the Germans were bent on evading payment as far as possible, though the payments demanded were also economically beyond German capacity. In March 1921 Allied troops occupied Duisburg, Ruhrort and Dusseldorf as a punishment for Berlin's failure to maintain her payments, and a scheme was put into force whereby there would be a 50% levy on the value of German exports. On 25th October, 1921, it was admitted that the amounts received from Germany hitherto by Britain were not enough to pay the costs of the Army of Occupation, so that nothing so far had been collected towards the liquidation of the monetary debt, though under the newly signed Wiesbaden Agreement the Germans undertook to deliver to France reparations in kind—machinery, raw materials, livestock, etc.—for reconstruction of her devastated regions. In December the German Chancellor announced that he would not be able to pay the forthcoming January and February debt instalments of £25 million and £13 $\frac{3}{4}$  million, and offered £10 million instead, as a payment on account. The Reparations Commission refused to consider postponement unless a good case were made out, but later, at Cannes, agreed to grant a provisional delay.

The replacement of Briand by Poincaré destroyed all hope of a considerate handling of Reparations. At Genoa, Lloyd George received a Note from the absent Poincaré rejecting his proposal of an early meeting of the Supreme Council, as Poincaré wanted to preserve his freedom to invade the Ruhr. For this reason the French held aloof from the non-aggression pact which was signed at Genoa. But the German payments of £2 $\frac{1}{2}$  million on 15th May and 15th June removed the ground for such action. The German Government suggested that they could do better in the payment of reparations if they could get a loan. But a Commission of international bankers, headed by Pierpont Morgan, which examined German finances, said that she was not credit-worthy until her total liability for reparations was definitely fixed at a level within her real capacity to pay.

The problem of how much should be extracted from Germany was closely linked for Britain with the problem of how much she could hope to get from her Allies in respect of their war debts to her. The Russians, of whom Britain was a heavy creditor for both pre-war and war debts, were clearly not going to pay anything. The French, Belgians and Italians were disposed to plead that they could only pay if they could recover from Germany the indemnities they were claiming from her. The United States, which after her entry into the war had advanced credits and supplies to the Allies for their war effort while she was as yet taking little effective part in the fighting, was now beginning to press for payment. Though Britain had paid her own way during the war, she was, on paper, a considerable debtor of the United States, because, being the most credit-

worthy of the Allies, she had used her credit to raise loans for her Allies, France and Italy. The view of Lloyd George's Government was that all these war debts were properly little more than paper transactions, recording the respective financial contributions each country had made to their joint victory, and should no more be regarded as requiring full financial liquidation than the losses of each country in killed and wounded called for equalization by population transfers. But if any war-debt settlement was to be made, it could not be separated from the question of German Reparations.

In order to clear the air about this issue, and in preparation for a Conference which was to be held in London on 7th August to consider Reparations and War Debts, a Note was issued on 1st August by Balfour on behalf of the British Government which pointed out that Britain was a creditor in respect of war debts from her Allies and Reparations from Germany for a total sum of £3,400 million, and in her turn owed the United States £850 million. So far Britain had made no demand for repayment from her Allies, and would prefer to cancel the whole account. The British people did not want to turn their great effort to free the world from German despotism into a commercial transaction, and the burden of international indebtedness was hampering the peaceful recovery of the world. Britain could not, of course, proceed to cancel every debt to her if she was required to pay the much smaller debt she owed, but she sought no profit out of war-time financial dealings. The Note declared:

"The policy favoured by His Majesty's Government is, as I have already observed, that of surrendering their share of German reparation, and writing off, through one great transaction, the whole body of inter-Allied indebtedness. But if this be found impossible of accomplishment, we wish it to be understood that we do not in any event desire to make a profit out of any less satisfactory arrangement. In no circumstances do we propose to ask more from our debtors than is necessary to pay our creditors. And, while we do not ask for more, all will admit that we can hardly be content with less. For it should not be forgotten, though it sometimes is, that our liabilities were incurred for others, not for ourselves. . . ."

At the London Conference Poincaré proposed to institute control of Germany's finances, of her Reichsbank, export licences, foreign currencies, revenues from mines and forests, to impose a Customs barrier between her and the occupied zone of the Rhine and to acquire a 26% share in all her industrial concerns. These proposals were referred to an Expert Committee, which failed to reach agreement about them. Lloyd George proposed a moratorium for the time being on German Reparation

payments, but Poincaré would not accept this without further German guarantees. The Conference broke up without agreement. A temporary compromise about Reparation payments was patched up by the Reparations Commission. But Poincaré's reply, on 1st September, to the Balfour Note, while it warmly welcomed the British suggestion of cancelling war debts, insisted that there could be no question of France forgoing her Reparation claims.

In the course of September an arrangement for the payment due from Germany to Belgium was made by the aid of the Bank of England, which underwrote the German bonds. But no sound solution of the Reparation problem had been reached by the date of Lloyd George's fall from office in October; and his successor, Bonar Law, was even less effective in restraining Poincaré from reckless punitive action against the Germans. The occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 brought Reparation payments to a sudden and final end. When they were later revived in name, it was by means of the Dawes and Young Loans. Those subsequent payments were in fact no more than the return of a part of the foreign money lent to Germany, and when, after the American slump developed at the end of 1929, the foreign loans dried up, these sham Reparation payments quickly came to an end.

The Reparation problem, which was so constant and calamitous an international irritant during the post-war years, was a very obvious demonstration of the evil wrought by America's withdrawal from participation in the peace settlement and the League of Nations. The European Powers were heirs to ancient jealousies and distrusting, and so soon as the common danger of Germany was overcome these disturbing forces began to reassert themselves. Lloyd George, instinctively British in his diplomatic outlook, naturally aimed at restoring a European balance, and thus found himself meeting bitter antagonism from France, which wanted to keep Germany powerless and establish a French hegemony in Europe as a safeguard against any Teutonic revival. The French gratitude to Britain and Britain's Premier which had foamed so freely immediately after the armistice very swiftly went flat. Under Poincaré, French policy showed no sentiment of gratitude or even of friendship. France, indeed, was not averse from double-crossing Britain where she saw any advantage to herself. She eventually did so in connection with the Turkish peace settlement.

Turkey had been left until the last when peace terms were being negotiated with the defeated enemy powers. There was a reason. The pre-war Turkish Empire had been very extensive, and included a number of territories which would never go back under her control, and others which it was at least proposed to take away. The settlement of the future of these lands was far from easy, and seemed far less urgent than

the fixing of national frontiers in Europe, where peoples with considerable cultural and industrial development were demanding freedom to organize themselves as autonomous states. The peasant populations of the Near East, where time traditionally stood still, could surely wait until the boundaries and governments of Czecho-Slovakia and Poland, of Austria, Hungary, Italy and Roumania, had been agreed!

The Allies were mistaken, for the unchanging East had been started at last on the move, as Lloyd George was presently to learn to his cost.

Within living memory the Ottoman Empire had included most of the Balkans, North Africa, Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia and Arabia, though the suzerainty of Turkey over the Balkan States and the territories of North Africa was little more than nominal. Greece had been independent since 1830, and Serbia and Montenegro practically so for even longer. Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908, and Bulgaria's independence was next year fully acknowledged by the Porte. Egypt, though formally acknowledging Turkish suzerainty, had in effect been under British protection since 1882, and officially became a British Protectorate in December 1914, after Turkey had entered the war on Germany's side. Italy had annexed Tripoli in the Italo-Turkish War of 1911. Algeria, conquered by the French between 1830 and 1847, had eventually been incorporated into Metropolitan France. Tunisia became a French Protectorate in 1881, and French and Spanish Protectorates developed in Morocco from the Algeciras Settlement of 1905. In the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913 Turkey lost much of her remaining European territory, ultimately keeping only Eastern Thrace up to the Maritza river. But she still retained a desolating and unpopular dominion over the Arabs of Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, Arabia and Mesopotamia, and over the unhappy and much persecuted Armenians.

In the First World War the Ottoman Empire was crushed, and the future of its parts had to be determined. Complicating factors were various promises or suggestions made to Italy, Greece, the Jews and the Arabs in the course of the conflict; offers designed to persuade them to support the Allied cause; pacts with France and Russia about spheres of influence; problems of Mandates for the backward regions which as yet had no indigenous governments able to provide them with efficient administration. The discussion of these questions dragged on for some time.

In the early days of the war Russia had laid claim to Constantinople as one of the fruits of victory when gained, but the Bolshevik Government renounced this claim. Italy had been offered a sphere of influence in Adalia, in Asia Minor, as a prize for entering the war on the Allied side; and later, when she was showing indignation at having been left out of the discussions which produced the Sykes-Picot Agreement of 1916,

dividing Asia Minor into Russian, French and British spheres of influence, Lloyd George made her an offer, at the Conference of St. Jean de Maurienne in 1917, of the southern half of Asia Minor, including Smyrna, which Sir Edward Grey had earlier offered to Greece in an unsuccessful attempt to bring her into the war on the Allied side. Italy already held the Dodecanese Islands off the coast of Asia Minor, having occupied them during the Italo-Turkish War. France had long been extending her influence in Syria, and was firmly resolved to gain possession of it. The Arabs who had rallied to Hussein, King of the Hedjaz, were no less resolved to bind all the Arab countries into a new Arab Empire, and had been given promises which they interpreted to go a long way in that direction. By the Balfour Note the Jews had been promised a National Home in Palestine, with the implication that when they had occupied that land they would be able to establish in it their own administration. Both Lloyd George and Wilson would have liked to turn the Turks out of Europe, but this would necessitate putting someone else in Constantinople. A Mandate for Constantinople and the zone of the Dardanelles and also for Armenia was offered to the United States, but though Wilson provisionally accepted it, the American Senate ultimately turned it down.

France was given a Mandate over Syria, of which the Emir Feisal, son of King Hussein, had, after long discussions, been given the throne. He did not sit there long in comfort, for the French proceeded to expand their authority over the country till at last they marched on Damascus and turned him out. The Mandate for Palestine was offered to the United States, but in the end Lloyd George had to accept it for Britain. No one else wanted it; and if they could have looked into the future they would have wanted it still less. Transjordan and Mesopotamia were also placed under a British Mandate. As for Southern Anatolia, the offer of it to Italy at St. Jean de Maurienne had been conditional upon Russian confirmation. Russia did not confirm, and Wilson was antagonistic. Venizelos put up a strong case for the cession of Smyrna and its hinterland to Greece, and the Supreme Council agreed to this. There had always been a very considerable Greek population in the ports and coastal regions of South-West Asia Minor.

The discussion of all these matters drifted on for a considerable time, though the biggest delaying factor was the uncertainty whether or no America would accept the Mandate for Constantinople and Armenia. When her refusal was certain, the Supreme Council met in February 1920 to complete arrangements for a peace settlement of Turkey. Treaty terms were finally presented to the Turks on 24th April, and were signed at Sèvres on 10th August, 1920. Constantinople and a small surrounding territory were left to the Turks in Europe, but the land on both sides of the Bosphorus, Sea of Marmora and Dardanelles was made a neutral zone,

to be controlled by an International Commission. The rest of Turkey-in-Europe was given to Greece, which also was to have control of Smyrna and a large hinterland in Western Asia Minor. All Turkey's former Imperial possessions were taken from her, Armenia and the Hedjaz becoming independent states, Syria, Palestine and Irak becoming Mandate-controlled states. Turkish suzerainty over Egypt, the Soudan, Libya, Tunis and Morocco was formally renounced.

But the Treaty of Sèvres, which was never ratified, was exploded before it was signed. The Allies were treating with the *de jure* Turkish Government at Constantinople. But while they had been delaying, waiting for America's decision about the Mandate offered to her, and discussing the claims of Italy and Greece to Turkish territory, a new development had taken place in Turkish internal politics. Mustapha Kemal Pasha, the officer who had organized the successful Turkish opposition to British forces at the Dardanelles in 1915, convoked a Turkish National Congress at Erzerum on 23rd July, 1919, which set up a National Organization in rivalry to the Constantinople Administration. Angora, in the heart of Anatolia, became its new capital, and a Nationalist army was formed. In the autumn it won an electoral victory and became the majority Parliamentary party, but was turned out of Constantinople in March 1920 by the Allied force under General Milne, and the "old gang" reinstated. The banned Turkish parliament retreated to Angora, where Kemal's government was rapidly gathering the united support of the Turkish people. The Turks who signed the Treaty of Sèvres were no more than a puppet government held in office by the Allies. Negotiation with them was merely wishful thinking.

A second cause which handicapped the Allies in imposing their terms on Turkey was the attitude of France. The pre-war links between France and Turkey had been very strong; most of the external debt of the Sublime Porte had been held by French bondholders. Their financial pressure was exerted on the French Government (where Millerand had replaced Clemenceau) to ensure that Turkey should not be too heavily crushed by the peace terms, lest all hope of recovery of French investments in Turkey should be destroyed. This it was that caused the French to insist that Constantinople should be left to the Turks, and the "bag and baggage" expulsion policy should be abandoned. The moral alliance of France and Turkey was later to cause Lloyd George's downfall.

Italy had also swung over into opposition to Lloyd George's ideas about Turkey. Here, too, a change of government had taken place, and the new Italian Ministers had abandoned the idea of annexing and colonizing Southern Anatolia, and were looking, instead, for concessions to exploit. They shared the Millerand attitude of ceasing to care about securing justice for the oppressed races that had groaned under the heel

of the Turk, and desired only to ensure that a friendly Turkey should be established, with which they could do profitable business.

Finally, the Treaty of Sèvres flew in the face of the actual fact of the Graeco-Turkish War which was developing in Asia Minor. The Greeks were carving out their new domain around Smyrna, and came into conflict with the Turks. Hostilities opened and for a time the Greeks were markedly successful; but the Greek King, Alexander, died as the result of a monkey bite in October 1920, and the able Greek statesman, Venizelos, who was the prime mover in the policy of creating a Magna Graecia in Asia Minor, lost power. The Graeco-Turkish War swayed back and forth across Asia Minor during the summer of 1921. In October the French emissary, Franklin Bouillon, made a pact with the Kemalists, whereby French forces were withdrawn from Cilicia and a favourable Turkish frontier with Syria was set up. France also arranged to supply munitions to Turkey for her war with Greece—a shamelessly treacherous act, since the Sèvres Treaty to which France was a party gave Greece the area in Asia Minor, her occupation of which had started the war.

Kemal proceeded to reorganize his forces, and in July 1922 he swept down on the Greeks, routed them and drove on to Smyrna, which was sacked and burnt, all Greeks found being pitilessly massacred. Then he turned and pursued the remnants of the Greek forces towards the Straits, with the object of crossing to the European side and driving them out of Thrace. But in accordance with the Sèvres Treaty, an international neutral zone had been set up around the Straits, protected by an inter-Allied force. When Kemal drew near, the French and Italians withdrew their troops, leaving the British under General Harington to face the advancing Turks.

It was an anxious situation for the British Government. If they also withdrew their forces and allowed the Turks to sweep across into Thrace, to massacre the Greeks there as they had done in Smyrna, it would not only be a contemptible betrayal of their trust, but would wreck British prestige throughout the Moslem world, causing uprisings against them in Iraq, India and other countries. Lloyd George decided that we must maintain the neutral zone, and reinforcements were rushed to Harington. Churchill, snuffing the battle from afar, gleefully co-operated by despatching to the British Dominion Governments an appeal for their support in the event of hostilities with Turkey.

General Harington saved the situation by the exercise of extreme tact and skill in his negotiations with Kemal. After a period of acute tension an armistice was agreed, and on 3rd October a Conference opened at Mudania, which reached full agreement by 11th October on the terms of a Convention to regulate affairs pending a renewed Peace Conference.

By the Convention, the Turkish frontier in Europe was advanced again to the Maritza and the Greeks had to evacuate Eastern Thrace.

But nothing could save the Coalition Government from the obloquy of having inflicted a new war scare upon a very war-weary world. Churchill's dramatic appeal to the Dominions when the Turks were threatening General Harington's forces at Chanak extracted a reluctant promise of support from Australia, but Canada and South Africa asked for further information before they would promise anything. Lloyd George's resolve to stand firm against Kemal's advance and prevent the Turks from overrunning the forces garrisoning the zone of the Straits and spreading massacre through Thrace was beyond question the right decision. Bonar Law, indeed, though he had now moved well away from Lloyd George, and would shortly head the movement to oust him, wrote to *The Times* on 7th October, pointing out how essential it had been for the Government to act as it did. But the public at large felt that there must have been some bad blundering somewhere to raise an imminent threat of fresh war, so soon after the long struggle of 1914-1918 had ended in complete victory. Lloyd George's stock slumped heavily, and those forces in the Tory Party which had been writhing in furious impotence while he made peace with the Irish and pressed forward his social legislation now saw that their hour had come to overthrow him. If Lloyd George was a political Samson, Greece had unwittingly been cast for his Delilah, and delivered him, bound, into the hands of the elders of the Tory Philistines. Even Garvin, who had stuck by him in the *Observer* with dogged loyalty, mournfully deserted him over Chanak, and wrote:

"The Premier's position has become quite untenable with any credit to himself or advantage to the country. . . . He has lingered too long and hopelessly outstayed his luck."

The Turkish muddle was not the real cause of the break between Lloyd George and the Tories, but it provided the pretext for the break. The Coalition, necessary in war and desirable in the first stage of peace-making and post-war reconstruction, was a creaky, ineffectual machine for peacetime politics, and its doom was predestined.



*Part VI*

PLANNING BRITAIN'S FUTURE

1923–1935



## CHAPTER XXI

### LIBERALS IN ECLIPSE

IT seems a firmly established convention that the war leaders of democratic countries shall be swiftly thrust aside when victory has been attained. Of the Big Four who framed the peace treaties at Paris after the First World War, Orlando, the Italian, fell from office on 21st June, 1919, before even the Versailles Treaty had been signed. Clemenceau was cast off by the French next year, and in the autumn of 1920 Woodrow Wilson went into retirement and witnessed the rejection of his policy and his Party by the Americans. More recently, Franklin Roosevelt died before the Second World War reached its end, thus escaping his critics, and Winston Churchill was turned out of office on the eve of final victory. De Gaulle, leader of the French forces which kept up the fight for freedom, did not hold office long after victory was won. Only the inscrutable and sinister figures in the Kremlin have retained unbroken sway. But Russia is not a democracy, as that word is understood in the West.

Lloyd George remained in office after the close of the First World War longer than any of his contemporaries; partly, no doubt, because he was recognized by all the world to be far the greatest of them all, and towered above any possible rival; partly through his political skill and address; partly through the loyalty given to him by the leaders of a party normally opposed to him. When the Tory leaders could no longer hold their followers within the Coalition, Lloyd George had to follow the well-beaten track which so many statesmen before him had taken.

As one looks back on the story, it is clear that he had signed his political death-warrant when he concluded the peace with Ireland. From that point a rot set in among the Tory Coalitionists: a movement to dissociate themselves from L.G. and his Liberal group. All through 1922 the disaffection was growing rapidly. The Turkish impasse and the threat of war in September and October merely served to crystallize the Tory hostility. People dislike being scared, and it was easy to turn their anger against the Government.

The grotesque quality of the Tory revolt over the Chanak incident arose from the fact that if the firm front shown by Lloyd George and Churchill to the Turkish menace had a rather Palmerstonian colour, it was of a kind which Tories would normally be expected to approve. They would certainly have been furious, and justly so, if L.G. had shown weakness or pusillanimity. A Tory peer, Lord Newton, a member of the anti-Lloyd George group, happened to be in Constantinople during the

crisis, and wrote to L.G. on 27th October, 1922, to deplore the futility and unfairness of the attacks that had been made upon his action in the Near East.

"I should like to assure you," he said, "that the prompt action of your Government was emphatically approved by everyone at Constantinople, and that it was realized generally that the action had saved Europe from a fresh disaster, as well as preventing the massacre of many Greeks and Armenians. . . .

"Before leaving Constantinople, about a fortnight ago, I took the trouble to state the real facts in a letter to *The Times*, but the editor refused to publish it, doubtless because it was considered to be too much in your favour."

It is one of the ironies of history that Lloyd George, after carrying with Tory support a number of Liberal measures, including Irish self-government, was ousted by the Tories when he stood firm for British international prestige and good faith! But those who were anxious to shed the alliance with him were thankful for any excuse. Stanley Baldwin, who as President of the Board of Trade was one of his Ministry, worked hard to organize a group of independents at a Carlton Club meeting which, in face of the growing unrest in the Party, Austen Chamberlain agreed to summon on 19th October. At this meeting of Tory Ministers and M.P.s it was expected that Chamberlain would secure a vote of confidence, and the Coalition a new lease of life. But after an appeal by Baldwin, Bonar Law declared against continuing the Coalition, and Chamberlain was defeated. The Tory Ministers at once resigned, and Lloyd George tendered the resignation of his Ministry to the King and advised him to send for Bonar Law.

The former Tory leader, though in failing health, had been persuaded by Baldwin to lead the anti-Coalition movement in order to rescue the Tory Party from disaster. He accepted the Premiership, and Baldwin got his reward as Chancellor of the Exchequer, with reversion to Bonar Law's office—for which he had not to wait long, as the strain was too much for Bonar Law, and he broke down and retired in the following May. Baldwin's rapid promotion was due not so much to his merit as to the fact that 13 of the Tory ex-ministers, including Austen Chamberlain, Birkenhead, Balfour, Horne and Worthington-Evans, wrote to Lloyd George denouncing the Carlton Club attitude. None of them took office in the Bonar Law Administration, and the coast was left clear for lesser men.

The new Government proceeded at once to hold a General Election. A Conservative victory was, of course, a foregone conclusion, for the Liberals were divided by a bitter feud and a number of them had moved

across into the ranks of Labour. The former Coalition Liberals took the title of National Liberals. They had been formally banned from the ranks of the official Liberal Party. In January 1922 Lord Gladstone had announced that the Independent Liberals were entering the list and taking the field against Lloyd George; and on 10th March he sent, as chairman of the Party organization, a letter to the *Yorkshire Evening News*, declaring that there could be no reunion with the Lloyd George wing unless its members denounced their own past and repented publicly their sin of co-operating with the Tories. At the National Liberal Club the portraits of Lloyd George and Winston Churchill had been solemnly taken down from their places of honour and consigned to the basement. The Party propaganda was an incessant flood of scurrilous abuse of Lloyd George, whose every act was denounced as criminal. Even the Versailles Treaty, which Asquith had so warmly praised when it was first concluded, became in the Liberal view an outrageous document, because it was the work of Lloyd George! So the two wings of Liberalism, far from combining to fight the election, were in opposing camps and, in some constituencies, promoted rival candidates.

The election took place on 15th November, and gave the Tories a clear majority over all other parties of some 72 seats. Labour, significantly, moved up to second place, with the Independent Liberals and National Liberals third and fourth respectively.

Lloyd George had been handicapped in the election fight by the fact that he was still trying to keep open a door for the assembling of a Centre Party of moderate Liberals and Conservatives. His fondness for coalition died hard; and the fact that so many distinguished Conservatives remained loyal to him misled him into hoping that he could build up a progressive but anti-Socialist movement to carry on his schemes of reform. But the course of the election demonstrated that there was no sufficient backing in the country for such a movement, and the veteran Radical returned to Parliament at the head of a little party of 55 members, many of whom were very Right-Wing in sentiment and depended for their seats on Tory support.

He occupied a unique position. He was by far the most outstanding political figure in the nation, with a world-wide reputation. He retained an immense personal popularity. But in Parliament only a small group acknowledged his leadership, and although his supporters had built up a party organization, it had not made much headway in the constituencies. It could not very well assail Tory constituencies while the Coalition Liberals and Conservatives were allies. Except in terms of personalities and leadership it had little basis for entering into rivalry with the Independent Liberals. Its chief asset, indeed, was the Party Fund, which during its brief life it had accumulated.

All parties, as Lloyd George with his long experience of politics was very well aware, must have funds with which to carry on their electoral fights; to provide literature, agents and offices, and meet the expenses of elections and party conferences and demonstrations. When the Coalition Liberals found themselves, after the 1918 election, expelled from the official Liberal Party, it became essential for them to acquire their own sinews of war. Lloyd George told his lieutenants to get to work.

The source of all political funds is, of course, the subscriptions and donations of its supporters. While the minor expenses within a constituency may be met by membership subscriptions of the divisional association, the party's central funds are mostly built up of much larger sums from its wealthier adherents. Such gifts are not always inspired by sheer altruism. If a big-business man dips his hand deep into his pocket for his party, it is usually in the expectation of getting a return—perhaps to maintain Free Trade, if he is a shipowner, or to secure a protective tariff, if he makes electrical goods or, if he is a brewer, to help those who will resist anti-liquor legislation. Trade Unions and Co-operative Societies raise political funds to protect their special interests. But in addition to those who have some commercial or industrial axe to grind there are many who contribute to the party because they—or their wives—are desirous of seeing their names figure in an Honours List “for Political and Public Services”. Honours, it is true, are not for sale. They are a reward for service to King and Country; but that service may have taken the form of aiding the King's Government to carry on by supporting the funds of the party in power. This has been recognized by all parties from time immemorial.

Circumstances were propitious, during the lifetime of the Coalition, for the collection of funds. The immense outpouring of Government money for war purposes had inevitably filled a number of pockets. Men who had been carrying out big tasks of war industry had helped the country and willy-nilly waxed rich in the process. It was appropriate that their services should be rewarded. It was not surprising if they drew attention to their merits by contributing to the funds of the parties in power.

Both wings of the Coalition, Conservative and Liberal, gained heavily from this source. But if Younger had outwitted Guest in the matter of coupons for the 1918 election, the henchmen of the Coalition Liberals were certainly no whit behind their Conservative colleagues in their adroit methods of exploiting the thirst of war-wealthy citizens for titles and decorations. It cannot be denied that the campaign reached unseemly dimensions and that some of the devices adopted for obtaining clients were frankly discreditable, though there is no evidence that Lloyd George himself or his principal lieutenants had any knowledge of the methods to

which some of their subordinates resorted, and the same can be said on behalf of Bonar Law. Eventually the traffic provoked public scandal, and on 17th July, 1922, Lloyd George moved the appointment of a Royal Commission to advise on the procedure for the preparation of Honours Lists.

Fantastic rumours gained currency about the size of the Coalition Liberal share of the swag, which in fact was at no time anything like so great as some people alleged. Both the Tory and the Liberal Funds suffered various vicissitudes, for much of the Tory Fund later was lost through an unhappy investment in the *Morning Post*, while a similar investment of the Liberal Fund in the *News Chronicle* yielded a handsome return. But a good deal of it was later represented by certain investments which during the depression of 1931-3 fell to a very low price. The Fund was freely drawn on by L.G. to finance inquiries into problems of Coal and Power, Rural and Urban Land Reform and Industrial Policy. A good deal also went in subventions to the Liberal Party Organization. The greater part of the Fund still in hand was expended in connection with the 1929 election, and the remainder dwindled through the following years. Its amount in recent times is reported to have faded to negligible proportions.

The "Lloyd George Fund" was, however, at one time a subject of lively comment and criticism on account of the exceptional conditions under which it was held. During the Coalition the contributions to both Tory and Liberal Party Funds were made explicitly to further the policies of the Tory and Liberal heads of the Coalition. They were distinct from the main Tory Party Fund on the one hand, and from the Independent Liberal Party Fund on the other. But there was no marked division between the Tory wing of the Coalition and the Party as a whole, and after Bonar Law's death in 1923 the Tory Party seemed the natural residuary legatee for the money which had been raised in his support. The Liberal Fund was in a very different position. Lloyd George was for some time excommunicated from the official Liberal Party, and when a reconciliation was patched up it was little more than an armed truce. The bitter dislike and distrust of him nursed by Asquith's lieutenants and by the heads of the Liberal Central Office was quite unconcealed. Had they been able to get control of his Fund and incorporate it in the official Party finances, they would joyfully have flung him out of the window. The Fund, however, had not been subscribed for Liberalism in general, still less for an anti-Lloyd George group's benefit. Its object was to promote Lloyd George's political ideas, and as he had good reason to doubt whether the official Liberal organization shared those ideas, he retained the Fund under Trustees on whom he could rely. For some years these were Lord St. Davids and his former Secretary, Sir John Davies.

After their deaths he arranged for his son Gwilym and himself to be trustees for the Fund, and what is left of it is today administered by the sole surviving Trustee.

A "Personal" political Fund, subject to the arbitrary disposition of a single statesman, was not unprecedented. Like the Coalition Liberals, the Liberal Unionists had possessed such a Fund, and when the distinguished Unionist, Joseph Chamberlain, started his Tariff Reform campaign, the President of the Liberal Unionist Association, the Duke of Devonshire, wrote to him on 23rd October, 1903, pointing out that he was not prepared to subsidize local associations which adopted Tariff Reform out of the Party Fund, and that this was

"a fund which in no sense belongs to the association, but was collected by me, and entrusted to me personally, as the Leader of the Liberal Unionist Party, to be applied at my discretion for political purposes."

Had Lloyd George, like the Duke of Devonshire before him, moved over gradually and merged his Coalition Liberals with the Tory Party, little more would have been said about his Fund than was said about the similar fund of the Duke. But L.G. remained a Liberal, although pursued with poisonous hatred by the leading figures of official Liberalism. His possession of the valuable potential represented by this money roused their impotent fury. They girded at him ceaselessly about it, in Press and on platform. With clumsy guile they hinted that he could expiate his crimes against Liberalism and purchase their warmhearted confidence by handing over his hoard. But "surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird!" The Tories as a whole were far less perturbed about the Fund, and tended to look on it as a faintly scandalous jest, though a small section of them, of the *Morning Post* school, snarled viciously at the mention of it.

L.G.'s own view of the nature of the Fund was set out in a letter he wrote to Lord Reading on 14th August, 1929, in the course of which he said:

"... I will give you quite frankly my view of the L.G. Fund business, as it appears to me after mature reflection and looking at it from every angle. First of all let us have the facts:

"(1) It is not in the least a Party Fund in the usual acceptance of the term. The usual Party Fund represents an accumulation of gifts made through the Party Whip for Party purposes. My Fund does not represent gifts made to any Party. It started with donations made through my Whip to me when I was a non-Party Premier to be used

for such political purposes as I thought it desirable to spend them upon. At that time there was a very large body of non-partizan opinion which rallied around me and was convinced that my direction of affairs was essential, not only to the winning of the war, but afterwards to the clearing up of the mess that follows war. This opinion was particularly concerned about the unrest throughout the world and was very apprehensive that Bolshevik doctrines might overthrow Society. They trusted me to see the country through this period of anxiety. Party considerations never entered their minds. It was entirely a matter of personal confidence. Grey and his friends will no doubt regard that confidence as being entirely misplaced. But as to its existence at that time there can be no doubt, and it is that which matters when you come to consider the motive that raised the Fund. Were I to abandon my control of this Fund and hand it over to the organization of any political party, I should be betraying a trust. That does not mean that I am not within my rights in making grants from time to time for the promotion of political ends which are consistent with its creation.

"(ii) Freddie Guest was the chief instrument in gathering together this Fund, and he maintains that in so far as it has any purpose beyond affording me political support it was anti-Socialist in its aims, and both he and Winston claim that I have no right to part with it for any other purpose. Winston has repeatedly said so in public. I feel certain that Freddie is watching carefully my action with regard to that Fund. As long as I keep the control of it in my own hands, he cannot move, for he knows that the personal element was the dominant motive in all the donations. The moment I depart from that position and hand it over to a purely party organization, he will strike. It is too often overlooked that he has behind him one National Liberal organization which is still in being. It refused to be wound up in 1923, and claims to be the rightful inheritor after me of the whole of this Fund.

"(iii) When Asquith and I combined our forces in 1923, he never asked that the Fund should be handed over. The only financial condition in the arrangement we made was that I should find £100,000 to fight the battle of Free Trade at that Election. As a matter of fact £160,000 was found out of the Fund to support the Party candidates at that Election. Asquith never departed from that position. He was pressed very strongly to do so especially by Pringle who was insistent that the whole coffer should be handed over to the National Liberal Federation. Asquith told me, and I am inclined to think he also wrote to me, that he had decided finally not to urge Pringle's contention and that as far as he was concerned he made no claim to the remnant of the Fund.

“(iv) There is another important factor when you come to consider the personal character of this Fund. No one knows better than you that the existing Fund has almost entirely been created by me. The original cash has been spent long ago, and a good deal more. What is in hand now is due entirely to my handling of the *Daily Chronicle* business. When the paper was in low water I bought a number of shares. I agree it was a great risk to take, but I put the whole of my strength and my experience in the newspaper business into improving the value of the investment. I took in hand the supreme direction of the business policy of the enterprise, and owing to great savings, changes and improvements which were the direct result of my intervention, the property increased enormously in value so that I was able to sell it at several times the sum I paid for it. As you know I conducted all the negotiations for the sale, but it took years of careful handling and direction to create that value. The Fund, therefore, is not merely an L.G. Fund in its inception, but it is specially so in its present form. It is rather a cool proposition to ask me now to hand it all over to men who have done nothing but criticize and cast mud at this Fund, when I was sweating hard to increase it.

“(v) The Trustees who control the Fund, as you know, consist of the Chief Whip, the second Whip of the Party, and two ex-Whips. They act under the Chairmanship of Lord St. Davids. I never interfere in any of their payments unless there is a great question of policy upon which I am consulted. These Trustees during the last few years have subsidized the Liberal Party munificently, and neither the National Liberal Federation nor any other representative of the organizations of the Party has ever sent me or them one word of thanks for the hundreds of thousands of pounds freely placed at their disposal. It has simply been ‘Hand me your dirty money.’ As a matter of fact, as I pointed out to you there is no cleaner money in the political market. It has been made entirely out of perfectly honest trading, and as the result of exceedingly hard work on my part. I gave all such organizing ability as I possess and all my long experience in the newspaper business (and I have had a very long experience) to enhancing the value of the property, so as to create a great reserve for some political emergency.

“(vi) But finally even if it were an ordinary Party Fund the supreme direction of its uses would vest in me as the leader of the Party chosen unanimously by the Liberal members of the House of Commons at a meeting summoned for the purpose. The Peers were also represented at this gathering. No political party would ever dream of handing over the control of its political funds to a National Federation. Asquith certainly never did, and he had a very large fund

at his disposal created by Aleck Murray. You know how it was established. Whenever I wanted cash for the Insurance Campaign, or the Budget Campaign, or afterwards for the Land Campaign of 1913, Asquith's sanction had to be obtained before the Chief Whip would part with one penny for that purpose. There could be no more foolish use of a Party Fund of this kind than to hand it over to an organization like the National Liberal Federation—chosen as it is for other purposes—for many reasons, which must be known to those who are in the slightest degree acquainted with the work of a political party.

"I have no doubt at all that the Trustees of the Fund would be quite prepared once more to assist the Party liberally at the General Election. . . . Why should not Grey and any friends of his discuss the matter direct with me? I should be only too delighted to meet him and anybody he would care to invite to discuss the question anywhere. I promise to do so quite candidly and to put all my cards on the table. I will see him anywhere he likes and at any time convenient to him. . . ."

Certainly the Lloyd George Fund was in the post-war years a political factor of marked importance. For during his years of power, Lloyd George had so overtopped his contemporaries that they could have applied to him the complaint of Cassius:

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus; and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs, and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonourable graves.

He had been clearer-eyed than any of them in his vision of what needed to be done; firmer in purpose; more fertile in resource and vastly more resilient in energy. Withal, he had been, it must be admitted, quick-tempered and impatient and at times brusque and domineering in his treatment of his colleagues. Philip Kerr (Lord Lothian), when in April 1921 he gave up his post as one of L.G.'s secretaries, admitted to Lord Riddell that he regarded his chief as a sort of superman, but remarked that he was becoming a real autocrat. Indeed, there were few if any of his colleagues who did not at some time or other come under the lash of a hasty anger that passed as quickly as it rose. When he fell from office it seemed that the Lilliputians had at last got Gulliver down, and his little enemies were determined never to let him rise again. In a large measure they succeeded. Though in the years that followed he made many bids for leadership and at times seemed very near to success, he never held another Government office. But he was by no means as helpless as his ill-wishers desired, for he still was armed with the power of the purse. His

fund enabled him to maintain an active office, where he could carry on political propaganda, conduct inquiries into national problems, and exert considerable influence in matters of policy. For a time he was even the leader of the crumbling remnant of the Liberal Party. The Fund, in short, acted as a partial antidote to the venomous ill will he had evoked in some quarters, and armoured him against the determination of his enemies to drive him out of public life.

Lloyd George was also armed in his private affairs against the menace of poverty when, after holding Cabinet office unbrokenly for 17 years, he retired and lost his ministerial salary; for Andrew Carnegie, in appreciation of the great part L.G. had played in saving Britain and the world from German tyranny, settled on him for life an annuity of £2,000. In addition, the ex-Premier had an unfailing source of revenue in his pen. Far distant were the days when the youthful "Brutus" was overjoyed to find that a paper would print, without payment, a communication from him. His comments on current events were now eagerly sought for and handsomely paid on both sides of the Atlantic, and for many years he was regularly turning out articles that were published both in England and in the United States and yielded an income on which super-tax was payable. Books were also compiled reproducing extracts from his more famous speeches, and some years later he took in hand the writing of his war and peace memoirs, the publication of which brought in no mean sum.

During his years as a Minister he had managed to make and invest a number of savings. So, while he was not one of the nation's men of great wealth, for all the greatness of his public services, he enjoyed a comfortable affluence, and was free from the worry of having to look twice at his money before spending it on something he wanted. This was as well, because though his tastes were simple and he was unattracted by the extravagant hobbies with which some wealthy men succeed in ruining themselves, he could not be bothered to count the cost when there was anything he strongly wanted to do. Now and again he would have a sudden spasm of economy and call loudly for retrenchment, when it seemed to him that his expenditure was getting out of hand. But the fit soon passed, and his easy, open-handed, uncalculating ways would be resumed, and the generous hospitality that was natural to him. In this he differed from Dame Margaret, who was also kindly and hospitable, but far more careful in checking expenditure and practising small economies.

When he left Downing Street, Lloyd George kept within reach of the House of Commons from his Surrey home at Churt, to which he had added a considerable acreage of derelict scrub and a small area of cultivated land. He also had Brynawelon, the Criccieth house where Dame Margaret spent most of her time, and where he went as a rule in the

summer. From his point of view, a serious drawback to Criccieth was that his own Welsh people, overflowing with loyalty and affection, regarded him as a national property, and when he was in residence there they streamed up at all hours to call on him and shake him by the hand. This was touchingly warm and friendly, but it meant that he could get little peace or privacy, and after enduring it for some time he would escape back to England, where his popularity, though great, did not lead to such embarrassingly pressing attentions. The gateposts of Brynawelon became carved all over with the names of Welsh pilgrims who had come to visit the home of their great leader. When there was not an inch uncarved, L.G. had them removed and fresh ones erected; but these too were quickly defaced in the same way.

For a town house he at first acquired one in Cheyne Walk, Chelsea, but a few years later he secured in the neighbourhood of Holland Park a pleasant Regency mansion with a large garden at 2 Addison Road.

In these material respects of homes, private means and political finances, Lloyd George was thus well provided when he fell from office. But in the things that mattered most to him, his political outlook and capacity to pursue the reforms that were his life's interest, he was for a time straying in the wilderness. It was hard for him to determine what line to take. He had just been cast out of office through the mutiny of the Tories, and his instinct was to hit back at them—hard. Yet a number of his Coalition Liberal supporters were fighting the election in collaboration with Tories; some were standing jointly with a Tory for a two-member constituency; and when he went to speak for them, he was driven back on his fading dream of a Centre Party of moderate men, united against Socialism. In this equivocal position he could not strike a clear, confident note. As yet no marked divergence of policy had arisen between him and Bonar Law's new administration whereon to attack it; and in relation to the Asquithian Liberals he was the attacked, not the attacker. When the election was over he announced that he and his colleagues would welcome co-operation in place of conflict with the Independent Liberals, and declared that if any such action on his part would bring about reunion, he would be perfectly prepared to serve under Asquith's leadership.

During the months that followed, Liberal reunion was actively canvassed by a number of men in both groups. Asquith stated that he thought the road to it must lie through joint action in the House, and a series of moves with this object took place. Lord Grey of Falloden was elected as joint Liberal leader in the House of Lords. In the debate on the King's Speech at the opening of the new Session in February H. A. L. Fisher, a Lloyd George Liberal, moved an Amendment to the Address on behalf of both wings of the Party. As the session wore on, several of

the National Liberals applied for and obtained the whip of the Asquithian wing.

There was still a demand by the more embittered of the Asquithians that the Lloyd George Liberals should only be allowed to reunite with them on condition that they sued for admission as suppliants, draped in the white sheet of penitence. Lloyd George, naturally, had no intention of doing anything of the kind. He was proud, not ashamed, of his record of Liberal achievement in the 1918-22 Parliament, for all that it had been aided by Tory votes. In a speech to his supporters on 14th March, 1923, he declared that he had stood by Liberalism quite as fully as Mr. Asquith in its dark days—not forgetting 1900! As for the record of the Coalition Liberals:

“We have stood by Liberalism during the last six years, and this is what we have got to show for it—a great Enfranchisement Bill, Home Rule for Ireland, the League of Nations, Disarmament, Education, Houses, Provision for the Unemployed. That is what we have got to show for it. If Liberalism asks us for a reckoning for the talents they gave us to trade with I show five fresh, shining talents added to them in these Bills. I am prepared to place that record side by side with that of any Liberal Government that ever existed, and to be proud of the comparison.”

An interesting feature about this boast is that it was really quite true. Lloyd George was frequently accused by his critics of being a political wobbler; and it is certainly the case that he often showed a readiness to gang up with his political opponents which alarmed his fellow-Liberals, just as he distressed them by his unorthodox views about the propriety of checking foreign dumping, by tariffs if necessary. But if the record is examined it can be seen that, unlike some of his most querulous critics, he never put his hands beneath the feet of those opponents. If he consorted with them, it was always with the object of capturing their support for his own plans, and he, not they, dictated the policy in which they co-operated. Of those rigidly orthodox Liberals, however, who persistently eyed him with suspicion, and wanted to cast him out of the Liberal synagogue, the same cannot always be said. McKenna, who played the chief part in sowing distrust between Lloyd George and Asquith, and thus bringing about the breach of 1916 which was ultimately to destroy the Liberal Party, turned Tory in 1923 and accepted Baldwin's invitation to become his Chancellor of the Exchequer. Simon and Runciman became the leading figures in the Liberal National group which from 1931 onward acted as a satellite of the Conservative Party, and supported policies of naked Toryism.

The open schism in the Liberal ranks between Asquithians and Lloyd Georgeites was bridged over by Baldwin, who had inherited the Premiership on Bonar Law's retirement in May 1923. Baldwin had set his heart on introducing Protection, and eyeing his big majority, he decided to seek a mandate for that policy from the country. Bonar Law died on 30th October, 1923, and immediately afterwards Baldwin translated into action the hints of his intention which he had already let fall, and on 2nd November he announced his intention of imposing protective tariffs on imports of manufactured goods, and of giving tariff preferences to the Dominions. When Parliament reassembled on 13th November, after its autumn recess, he informed it that a dissolution would take place on 16th November. Polling Day for a General Election was fixed for 6th December.

While this storm was brewing Lloyd George had been out of the country, paying a visit to the United States and Canada on the pressing invitation of his innumerable friends and admirers there. It was an extremely successful, if somewhat exhausting, tour. He travelled round by special trains, and found himself required to attend massed receptions—which he abominated—and to address huge mass meetings, which he took by storm. Fantastic financial offers had been made to him, which he turned down, for a lecture tour, and he made nothing by the trip except an enhancement of his already great reputation across the Atlantic, but he carried out a long-formed purpose of seeing the battlefields of the American Civil War, over which had been fought the conflicts whose course he had so eagerly followed in the newspapers when he was a boy; and he was also able to visit the log cabin where his boyhood's hero, Abraham Lincoln, was born.

He had left England on 29th September. He arrived back at Southampton on 9th November, to find the country beginning to seethe up for the coming General Election. There was a clear-cut issue to be fought: Free Trade *v.* Protection. Nothing could have been better designed to furnish a basis for the reunion of the two wings of Liberalism. He at once opened negotiations with Asquith, and on 13th November, immediately after Baldwin's announcement of his new policy and the coming appeal to the electorate, a notice was issued to the Press saying that the Liberals would fight in the election as a united Party. All candidates would stand as Liberals without label, and without regard to past differences. Soon afterwards, the official Liberal Election Manifesto was put out over the signatures of Asquith and Lloyd George. The first part of it was the pure milk of Free Trade doctrine, in opposition to Baldwin's protectionist proposals. The latter part, which dealt with such matters as extended unemployment insurance, pensions, enfranchisement of tenant farmers, improved conditions for farm workers, housing, temperance and child

welfare reforms, equal status for women, had a strongly Lloyd-Georgian flavour.

On 21st November the Executive Committee of the National Liberal Federation gave an official welcome to the reunion of the Liberal Party, and formal approval to the policy set out in the joint Manifesto. The breach between the two groups of Liberals had been healed—on paper.

The election, as anyone except a Baldwin might have foreseen, brought disaster to the Tory Party. Baldwin's political activities, both before and after this event, showed a curious alternation of Machiavellian subtlety and of childlike blundering. The year 1923 was one marked by two spasms of blunder. At the beginning, when sent to America by Bonar Law to negotiate a settlement of our war debt, he had innocently closed with the first terms offered, thereby saddling Britain with a quite unjustifiable burden, which had, in turn, to be carried by her debtors, while the fact that such terms had been laid on Britain made it difficult for the United States to deal more generously with the other countries which were in debt to her. Baldwin's debt settlement, indeed, which the horrified Bonar Law very nearly refused to ratify, played no small part in bringing about the world economic collapse of 1929-33—which, in turn, brought forth Hitler and the Second World War. Then, at the end of 1923, Baldwin foolishly insisted on rushing the issue of protection, which Bonar Law, though no less devoted to tariff reform, had more wisely put into cold storage as being an inappropriate policy for the unsettled times. Thereby he flung away the handsome majority which Bonar Law had bequeathed to him, and banished the Tory Party to the opposition benches.

At the dissolution, the Conservatives had held 344 out of the 615 parliamentary seats—giving them an absolute majority of 73 over all other groups combined. They came back after the Election 258 strong, while the opposing parties held 357 seats. Of these, Labour again was in the second place with 191 members, and the combined Liberal Party came third with 158. Some eight further members were Independents of one shade or another.

Thus for a second time the Liberals found themselves outnumbered by the Labour-Socialist Party. It was a development which Lloyd George had prophesied more than a decade earlier, but though it was, perhaps, inevitable, the Liberals with their long history and their memory of the recent pre-war days, when they held a great majority, found the pill hard to swallow. They could not believe it was more than a passing phenomenon. Lloyd George suspected it would prove more enduring. It was in that conviction that he had tried to join together the moderate men of the two older parties in a new alignment of non-Socialist Progressives.

That scheme had failed, and he found himself a member of a wrangling, mutually suspicious rump of a Party which had an honourable past but a foggy and unhopeful future. No doubt he was himself considerably responsible for the course of events which had raised those bitter feuds within the Party, and for the untimely foreshortening of its decline. There had been that moment in the middle of the First World War when he had been forced to choose between wrecking his Party and watching Britain crumble into defeat. His choice had seemed inevitable. For him it was inevitable. He was intensely patriotic, but never a very keen party man. The nation had eagerly approved his decision at the time, and posterity will undoubtedly confirm their judgment. But for all great gains a price has to be paid. The bill was now being presented, and Lloyd George had to accept the fact that the Liberals were no more than a balancing group between Tories and Socialists, and stood little chance of ever attaining a bigger status.

For the moment the question was whether the Liberals should support the Tory Government and keep it in power, or should join with Labour to turn it out, and offer their support to Labour on terms. For Asquith there was of course no difficulty. The Liberals had fought the election on the Tariff issue, to which the Tories were pledged. On that issue the Tories had lost. They were heavily outnumbered by the Free Trade vote. Out they must go.

There was in theory a third alternative. The Tories might have agreed to support a Liberal Administration on an agreed programme. Lord Hunsdon, the Chairman of the City of London Conservative and Unionist Association, publicly urged that Baldwin should do this, but the Tory leader refused, so Asquith was never put in the awkward position of having to decide whether he would accept Tory support such as for years he had been denouncing Lloyd George for receiving! He announced that as the King's Government must be carried on, and the Tories could not command a majority in the House for the issue on which they had appealed to the electorate, the next largest party, Labour, must be given its chance. Liberals would give it independent support so long as it did not attempt to launch Socialistic legislation.

Lloyd George supported this verdict. He had little love for Baldwin. He had not forgotten the Carlton Club meeting. He was a Free Trader, though—as the more rigid rabbis of the creed darkly hinted—not a strictly orthodox one. He did not share their view that tariffs were of the devil; his was the crudely practical attitude that as a nation dependent on trade it was to Britain's interest to keep the channels as open as possible. He held no brief for dumping, and would have approved the strongest measures, by tariffs or otherwise, to penalize it. He was not on principle opposed, as the old school of Liberals were, to co-operating

with Tories, but in his political ideas he stood very near to Labour, and indeed, at times was ahead of it.

So Ramsay MacDonald took office as the first Labour Prime Minister in the political history of Britain. He was a picturesque and dramatic figure, who had risen to that eminence from an even humbler and more obscure beginning than Lloyd George. He had a fine presence, a good voice and an imposing oratorical style, but the test of office revealed serious gaps in his capacity. Till now he had always been in opposition, with small expectation of attaining office, and an ability to rouse audiences with fervent speeches, filled with high aspirations and visions of future reforms, had helped him to leadership. But he was by nature a talker, not a doer, and when the time for mere words had passed and the hour struck for action, he fumbled and hesitated. Intensely proud, he hated to be beholden to anyone, and detested the fact that he was dependent on Liberal support. With his pride went a secretiveness of temper, which made him withhold his confidence even from his own colleagues, and still more from the experienced statesmen to whom he owed his position.

The Liberals, in consequence, found that helping him was a menial and thankless business. Lloyd George, speaking to his constituents on 22nd April, 1924, described how the Liberals carried out the drudgery of supporting the Labour Government in Parliament, early and late, sometimes through all-night sittings.

“How has that support been acknowledged? With unmitigated hostility in Parliament, out of Parliament, in the constituencies. Whilst Liberal members are voting for the Labour Government, Labour candidates have been put up against them throughout the constituencies, and Liberalism in the country is being hunted, if possible, to death. . . . When we support them, our support is received with sullen indifference. If we dare to criticize them, we are visited with a peevish resentment. . . . They give themselves the airs of Eastern Potentates, and say: ‘Liberalism? We have no further use for it. Off with its head!’ . . . Liberals are to be the oxen to drag Labour over the rough roads of Parliament for two or three years, and at the end of the journey, when there is no further use for them, they are to be slaughtered. That is the Labour idea of co-operation.”

He warned Ramsay MacDonald that although the Liberal Party had put him in office and wished him well, he had dissipated their stock of good will. No self-respecting party could go on supporting a government that treated them in the way the Labour Government was treating the Liberal Party. Further, the Government were not getting on with the job. They had, for instance, boasted that they had all their plans ready to

deal with unemployment, but in fact were only carrying on with the schemes started by the Coalition, and when Shaw, the Minister of Labour, was challenged to produce those plans, he complained, "You think I can produce schemes as if I were a conjurer pulling rabbits out of a hat!"

It was evident that relations between the two parties of the Left were strained.

Lloyd George was far too restlessly energetic to be content with giving political support to a Government that was vague, secretive and hesitant in its activities. Nor was he satisfied with subscribing to the current Liberal policy, which was too much disposed to repeat the shibboleths of a previous generation about peace, retrenchment and Free Trade. So he cast about for ways of putting substance into Liberal policy. The most urgent social problem confronting the country was that of coal. The miners were dissatisfied, and the industry was in difficulties which threatened to result in a breakdown. In March 1924 he formed a Committee of M.P.s, industrialists and students of economic affairs to examine the coal-mining industry and the use made of its products, with a view to finding out what ought to be done to reform it and put it on a sound basis. The Committee's report was published in July, in a volume entitled *Coal and Power*. It advocated State purchase of minerals and royalties, grouping and amalgamation of mines, an improved status for miners, with better housing and amenities and a more general conversion of coal into electric power and a wider distribution of electricity through the medium of the Electricity Commissioners. Nationalization of the mines was not, in the then condition of the industry, held to be desirable.

The recommendations of *Coal and Power* went far in advance of anything which was actually done on behalf of the mining industry for the next twenty years. But it was not unusual for Lloyd George to be ahead of his contemporaries. The Labour Party regarded nationalization as the one essential cure-all for the ills of coal-mining, and would consider no alternative. Baldwin, when he resumed office, was the last man in the world to take a scheme of Lloyd George and carry it out. It would have been much too much like hard work, and work of a kind for which he had no special gifts.

After eight months of uneasy existence, the Labour Government fell. Ramsay MacDonald had negotiated a Treaty with Soviet Russia of which public opinion strongly disapproved, and the Liberals proposed to challenge him on it. But he did not like the prospect of defeat on his own pet scheme, and chose instead to accept defeat on another issue—the Campbell case, where a Communist editor, J. R. Campbell, had been charged with inciting the armed forces to disobey orders, but the prosecution was withdrawn on account of pressure by certain Labour Members. A Liberal motion for a Select Committee to inquire into the

case was treated by MacDonald as a vote of "No Confidence", and he dissolved Parliament and appealed to the country.

The result was, of course, disastrous for the Labour Government. Their retreat from the prosecution of Campbell was thoroughly discreditable, and the Russian Treaty alienated a big section of public opinion. But what added the finishing touch to their discomfiture was the publication on 25th September—just four days before polling day—of a letter from Zinovieff, President in Moscow of the Communist International, giving the British Communist Party directions for organizing an armed insurrection. The Russians declared that it was a forgery, and the method by which it was communicated from the Foreign Office to the Tory Press was for some time obscure. But it was established that MacDonald had seen the letter, believed it to be genuine and yet continued to advocate the Russian Treaty and assert his confidence in Russia's good faith in his electioneering campaign up to the moment when the letter was published. So the "Red Letter" proved a devastating document and swung votes over very heavily to the Tories, who obtained a smashing majority—415 seats out of 615, or more than two-thirds of the membership of the Commons.

If it was disastrous for Labour, the election was fatal for the Liberals. Taken unawares, they were all unready for the fight, and barely managed to scratch up 342 candidates. As they had put Labour in power, they incurred full obloquy for all its mistakes. Lloyd George, who had followed up his study of Coal and Power by starting an examination of land problems in town and country, managed to get some of his ideas inserted in the Party Manifesto, but as there was clearly no chance of the Liberals winning the election the country was not much interested in their programme. In consequence, they very nearly disappeared. Only 42 Liberals were returned to Parliament. Asquith himself lost his seat, and never regained it. Out of well over 16,000,000 votes cast at the election, fewer than 3,000,000 were given to Liberals. The once mighty Party had dwindled to an ineffectual fragment.

## CHAPTER XXII

### POLICIES AND PARTY FEUDS

AFTER his defeat in the General Election at East Fife Asquith's prospects of getting back to the House of Commons were very dubious. Of the scanty handful of Liberals who had been returned, most owed their success less to their party label than to the strength of their personal support in the constituencies they represented. Ten of them sat for Welsh, and nine for Scottish, seats. The King offered Asquith an earldom, and in January 1925 he accepted that honour and passed to the Upper Chamber.

With the disappearance of their leader from the Commons, the bitter antagonism of the Asquithian wing of the Party to Lloyd George broke out afresh. For Lloyd George was now left without a rival as the biggest figure in the Parliamentary Party—a situation which his enemies found intolerable. Trevelyan Thomson wrote to the *Daily News* urging that in Asquith's absence the Liberal members should dispense with a chairman, and arrange among themselves from time to time for one or other to be their chief spokesman. When the members met on 2nd December, 1924, it was proposed by the anti-Lloyd George group that the Chief Whip, Sir Godfrey Collins—an Asquithian—should act as chairman at party meetings. An amendment appointing Lloyd George as the Sessional Chairman was adopted after the original motion had been rejected by 26 to 9 votes.

Thereupon ten M.P.s, with Runciman as their chairman, proceeded to form a "Radical Group", ostensibly as a "ginger group" within the Liberal Party, but actually as a rallying point for all anti-Lloyd George elements. Runciman declared their characteristic to be that they "were not embarrassed by compromise in any direction, either Right or Left". Commander Kenworthy (now Lord Strabolgi), a member of the Group, wrote:

"We believe that it is absolutely essential to show the country that true Liberals have finished with all ideas of pacts, Coalition and Centre Parties."

The Radical Group were, in fact, to be the stainless Pharisees of Liberalism, dispensing the pure milk of the Liberal word; the censors of its policy and the smellers-out of heretics. Unhappily, the pure milk of Liberalism, when it had been purged—as they insisted it must be—of

anything on which it would be possible to compromise or collaborate with either Tories or Labour supporters, was a somewhat thin and insipid beverage, sadly lacking in the stimulating qualities which could stir people to enthusiasm. Their real *raison d'être*—hatred of Lloyd George—was hardly a gospel to rally the masses, although at the time and for years afterwards a coterie of implacable snarlers used to meet daily at the National Liberal Club to hate Lloyd George over their lunch. The group looked round for some policy with a popular appeal, and their choice fell on the land. Had not "The Land for the People" been a cry which, at the time of the People's Budget, had stirred the whole nation? Had it not brought forth the Land Song, that swept vast audiences to frenzied enthusiasm in the two election contests of 1910? So the Radical Group started to call for a Land Policy, for the rating and taxation of land values, and raised their voices at their rallies in a quavering and rather pathetic effort to recapture the first, fine, careless rapture of the Land Song.

No doubt they hoped to exacerbate feeling thereby against Lloyd George, since during the Coalition period he had consented to the repeal of the 1910 Land Taxes, which, on account of the hampering limitations that had been imposed on them at the insistence of the Whig element in the 1909 Parliament, were yielding very disappointing returns. He had retained the Land Valuation, which had been the real object of his tax proposals, since it provided an official estimate of land values that had already been of immense service in checking exorbitant claims for compensation when land was needed for housing or other public purposes. But the Group's choice of a policy was singularly unfortunate; for while few of the general public remembered or clearly understood the issue regarding the 1910 Land Taxes, and fewer still cared about them, it happened that Lloyd George was at that very moment working hard with a committee of experts whom he had gathered for the purpose to hammer out a new statement of land policy for both town and country, which would cover the ground afresh far more effectively than the Radical Group were capable of doing, and would include in its recommendations most of the proposals which the Group were discussing.

Lloyd George's political headquarters had hitherto been at 18 Abingdon Street, three doors from the Liberal Central Office at Number 21. But in 1925 he took over the much larger premises of 25 Old Queen Street, where he set up the headquarters of his Land Enquiry Committee. Preliminary work had been carried out for this Committee in the summer of 1924, when investigators had visited countries on the Continent to collect facts about their systems of cultivation, land tenure, rating and taxation. The very thorough inquiries of 1912-1913 into land problems in Britain had also been checked over and the facts brought up to date.

For the members of the Radical Group it was extremely disconcerting that Lloyd George had succeeded in drawing around him, as members of his Land Enquiry Committee and as spokesmen for the policy it worked out, a number of prominent Liberals who had belonged to the Asquithian wing of the Party. They were men who found little enjoyment in chewing over the dry chaff of a bygone dispute, and preferred to close the Liberal ranks and combine with the Parliamentary leader of the Party in practical, forward-looking tasks. It would be unkind, and in most cases quite untrue, to suggest that any of them were at all influenced by the fact that Lloyd George disposed of a considerable political fund. It was clear to them that if Liberalism was to have any hope of a future, that hope was in Lloyd George. So even if they retained a degree of distrust of him, they decided to accept his leadership.

The Land Enquiry Committee produced two reports, rural and urban. The rural report, *The Land and the Nation*, known familiarly as the "Green Book", from the colour of its cover, was published on 9th October, 1925. Brilliantly written by the Secretary of the Committee, W. McG. Eagar, it set itself to solve the problem of how farmers should be encouraged to make the fullest productive use of the nation's agricultural land; and after examining the nature of the problem as revealed by the Enquiry, the lessons of other lands, and the legal background, it made very bold proposals for the revival of the countryside. Many of these were indisputably wise and beyond criticism. Runciman, who violently opposed the policy, admitted that he was in agreement with nine-tenths of it. But the most startling and controversial feature was the method suggested for giving to tenant farmers that full security of tenure which would encourage them to improve their farms and methods of cultivation without fear that they would lose the fruits of their efforts through raised rents or dispossession—perhaps by a change of landlords. The Green Book proposed to deal with this problem by making the State resume ownership of agricultural land, paying off the landlords and giving farmers security of tenure at fixed rents, provided they and their heirs maintained good cultivation.

This bold scheme certainly had the merit of simplicity, but the drawback of rigidity. The total abolition of private ownership of agricultural land did not commend itself to people generally. It seemed too drastic a short cut to the goal of a reasonable security of tenure, and likely, as short cuts often are, to land those who took it in unanticipated difficulties. Apart from this feature, however, the Committee's proposals, and the objectives they were designed to achieve, were widely welcomed.

The report on urban land problems, *Towns and the Land*, similarly known as the "Brown Book", came out on 24th November. It proposed to deal with urban congestion by greatly increased powers of town and

regional planning, acquisition of land for housing and open spaces at uninflated prices, rating of site values, levying of Betterment taxes, and leasehold reform, including under certain conditions the right of tenants of dwelling-houses to enfranchise their leaseholds. Unlike the Green Book, this report won an unqualified welcome from Liberals of both wings. Even Runciman admitted that he strongly approved of it.

The enemies of Lloyd George within the Liberal Party grew alarmed at the way in which he was filling the public stage and made a determined effort at this point to discredit him. In addition to attacking the doubtful features of his Rural Land proposals, they raised the issue of his political Fund. It seemed only too evident that this was a magnet, drawing to his side many waverers in the Party.

Vivian Phillips, a devoted henchman of Asquith, who had been appointed by him as Chief Whip in the 1924 Parliament, and was now, like his chief, without a seat in the Commons, decided to open the attack. More royalist than the King in his Asquithian partisanship, Phillips nursed the most unrelenting antipathy for Lloyd George. He writhed indignantly at the spectacle of the two leaders meeting not only publicly but privately for friendly discussions about their joint action. He would have liked to consign the Welsh statesman to outer darkness, and ban him entirely from the Liberal ranks. A little later on he succeeded in reopening the breach between his chief and his enemy, but only with the unintended result of leaving Lloyd George in full control of the Party, and thrusting Lord Oxford and Asquith into exile.

In the latter part of 1925 Vivian Phillips was working hard but with meagre success in the post to which Asquith had promoted him, of Chairman of the Organization Committee for the Liberal Million Fighting Fund—a campaign fund which the Party had decided in January to raise. It was rather galling for him that Lloyd George had at his elbow a Fund very much larger than anything which the combined strength of the whole Liberal Party throughout the country was able to contribute. It was true that Lloyd George had handed out upwards of a hundred and fifty thousand pounds from that Fund for the expenses of the 1923 and 1924 Elections, but when Phillips suggested that he should now hand over the balance to the Million Fund of the Party, Lloyd George not unnaturally told him that the money had been contributed for the support of his own political aims. At present these aims included his Land Policy, and until it was clear whether the Liberal Party supported that policy, further subventions to it from his Fund would not be forthcoming.

During the summer of 1925 negotiations had been on foot for a grant of £60,000 a year for three years from the Lloyd George Fund to the central funds of the Liberal Party. But when it became evident that there was likely to be opposition inside the Party to the Land Policy,



[By courtesy of "Punch"]

For this relief much thanks: cartoon by Bernard Partridge



*[Photograph by London News Agency]*

With Mrs. Asquith at King's Langley, July 12, 1924

*[Photograph by London News Agency]*

A Lancashire Lass greets L.G., November 28, 1923



and L.G.'s request that the Party should adopt this policy and undertake a campaign on its behalf was not accepted, he withdrew his offer and set up at Old Queen Street his own organization, the "Land and Nation League", to maintain propaganda in support of the schemes recommended by the Land Enquiry Committee. He would use his money to promote his policy, not to fee those who wanted to oppose it.

This attitude was, from L.G.'s angle, the plainest horse sense. To Phillips it sounded like crass bribery and corruption. Deeming that he now had a clear issue on which he could expose his enemy and utterly rout him, he publicly attacked Lloyd George in a speech at Hull on 20th November, 1925, in which he spilled the story of his failure to extract more of L.G.'s money, and of the conditions that had been indicated for its future use. The speech caused a considerable sensation. The Conservative Press rushed joyfully into the fray, printing every rumour, article or indignant letter it could get that suggested the likelihood of a complete split in the Liberal ranks, and the possible banishment of Lloyd George. Its effort to exacerbate the quarrel was very natural. Though crippled through the Liberal failure at the polls in 1924, Lloyd George was still by far the biggest figure in British politics; but if he could be driven out into the wilderness, with no party at all, his menace to the Tories would be eliminated.

Liberals themselves, even those who were unenthusiastic for Lloyd George, were alarmed at the threat of shipwreck to their party as the result of Vivian Phillips' vendetta, and gave him little encouragement. As for the unpopular feature of the Rural Land policy, the taking over of all rural land by the State, Lloyd George showed himself ready to compromise. The plan had looked excellent on paper, when explained and backed by the arguments of Eagar's clear and logical mind; but critics had discovered very serious practical difficulties which would beset it if it were really carried out, and it also suffered from the conclusive drawback that no one except the authors of the plan really liked it. Lloyd George himself had secret doubts, and when he found that those doubts were shared by the National Liberal Federation Council and the Candidates' Association, he agreed to limit State ownership to land held by bad landlords. Phillips was firmly rebuked by men on his own side for his indiscretion in publicly attacking Lloyd George, and the Earl of Oxford also intervened to smooth matters over. The curtain fell but turmoil went on behind the scenes.

It was arranged that a special Convention of the Liberal Party should be held for three days, 17th to 19th February, 1926, at the Kingsway Hall, to discuss L.G.'s Land Policy. The withdrawal of Asquith to the House of Lords and the antagonism to Lloyd George of a considerable section of the Liberal Party set more than one prominent Liberal thinking

about his own chances of capturing the Party leadership if the Land proposals were rejected and Lloyd George withdrew. Runciman had already staked a claim by becoming chairman of the Radical Group. Simon was believed to be watching the situation carefully. But now a third figure, Sir Alfred Mond (later Lord Melchett), who was one of Lloyd George's supporters, began to thrust forward as a potential rival.

Mond, in partnership with another Liberal, Sir John Brunner, had built up the firm of Brunner Mond, out of which had arisen the vast aggregation of Imperial Chemical Industries. He knew himself to be a powerful figure in finance and commerce, and would have liked to win a commanding place in politics. He was not attracted by the Rural Land policy, and from the first made no secret of his opposition. The Land Convention seemed to offer him a chance to place himself at the head of those Liberals who shared his dislike of it—or were ready to oppose anything that Lloyd George advocated—and thus capture the Party from his former chief.

When the resolutions to be submitted to the Convention were published by the Executive Committee of the National Liberal Federation, Mond wrote to Lord Oxford, solemnly resigning from the Liberal Party because of his objection to the Land Policy, and announcing his intention of joining the Conservatives. He sent his letter to the Press without waiting for a reply. But he turned up at the Convention to urge the rejection of the Rural Land proposals. His intervention was, however, ineffectual and he dropped out of Liberal politics.

The Land Convention was a lively affair, in which the temperature at times ran high. Most of those present warmly supported the new statement of policy. They were indeed only too glad in those grey times to have something positive, and unmistakably Radical, with which to appeal for popular support. But there were those in the Party who, like Mond, had no liking for Radical policies. And there were others who would find fault with whatever Lloyd George proposed. Self-appointed spokesman of these was W. M. R. Pringle, who had been a tireless and implacable critic of L.G. from the moment that the Second Coalition was formed. In the very first session of the Convention he poured out peevish and negative criticism on one of the resolutions till he was howled down. In a subsequent session, seated at the back of the platform, he snarled a spiteful comment when Hore-Belisha was speaking, and got his face soundly slapped. Hore-Belisha turned next moment and offered the assembly a frank and graceful apology which won their instant pardon. Pringle publicly rejected the apology in a rancorous croak which completely wiped out all sympathy for him. When he died two years later it was said that he had never mentally recovered from the slap.

The Land Policy as submitted to the Convention was carried with

comparatively little amendment. Lloyd George was conciliatory in his handling of objections, and many who came to curse remained, like Balaam, to bless. A few days later Lord Oxford publicly declared that the policy as it emerged from the Conference was consistent with Liberal principles and practice.

The stage seemed set for a real drawing together of the Party, with Lloyd George as its active leader and Lord Oxford as a benevolent monarch in the background. But the stars in their courses were fighting against organized Liberalism, and before three months had passed a new and more bitter breach between the two leaders occurred, leaving a scar in the Party that never healed.

The prime cause of the trouble was the decision of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Winston Churchill, announced in his Budget Statement on 28th April, 1925, to restore the gold standard—the parity of the sterling pound with the pre-war gold sovereign—which had been dropped during the World War. This step was taken as the result of pressure from Montagu Norman, the Governor of the Bank of England, whose dictation of British financial policy was sometimes disastrous to the country. Keynes warned the nation that loss of foreign markets, wage reductions and unemployment would follow, and on this occasion at least he was right. Lloyd George protested against the step in a speech at Wisbech on 10th July, 1925, declaring that the time was not ripe for it and that it was having a most disastrous effect on British trade.

“It has made sterling dearer, and thus artificially put up the price of British goods in the neutral markets where we were already competing on very narrow margins with our trade rivals. At this very hour coal-owners and miners have been driven to the brink of a yawning chasm of strife, largely through this deed of egregious recklessness by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.”

Coal, of which the country was a large exporter, felt the effect of the raised international value of sterling at once. It forthwith became dearer in terms of foreign currencies, and to keep export markets its selling price had to be lowered. The mine-owners naturally sought to reduce the cost of production, of which miners' wages were by far the biggest element. The miners refused to accept wage reductions, and when the owners gave notice to terminate the existing wage agreements the T.U.C. announced its support of the miners. A serious strike seemed imminent. The Prime Minister, Baldwin, failed to arrange a settlement. He refused to consider giving a subsidy to help out the miners' wages, but when the strike was little more than twenty-four hours distant he gave in and agreed to subsidize the wages while a Royal Commission

investigated the mining situation. He promised to accept the findings if they were agreed by both sides.

The Commission, presided over by Sir Herbert (now Lord) Samuel, reported unanimously on 10th March, 1926. The nine months' subsidy, which cost the country £24 million, was to end on 30th April. Both owners and miners rejected the Commission's report—the owners because it went too far, the miners because it did not go far enough. During the six weeks' grace Baldwin and his Cabinet did nothing to achieve a settlement. Just at the end there was some feverish and futile negotiation, but the subsidy was not this time forthcoming, and at midnight on 30th April a nation-wide coal stoppage began. Two hectic days of negotiation with the Trades Union Congress followed, and an agreement to end the coal stoppage was nearly in sight when news came of a refusal by the *Daily Mail* compositors to set an article denouncing the Unions, and the Cabinet broke off negotiations. On 3rd May the T.U.C. brought out most of the organized workers in a General Strike.

Up to this point the Liberal leaders were in full agreement in denouncing the blundering and feeble fashion in which the crisis was being handled by the Government. But when the General Strike began their ways parted. Oxford was quite clear that a General Strike, designed to force the hand of the Government, was a quite inadmissible political weapon—an effort by a minority of the nation to force the rest to do its bidding by intimidation and economic coercion. He held accordingly that irrespective of the rights and wrongs of the originating dispute, the Government must be supported in the task of defeating the strike. Lloyd George, while agreeing in condemning the General Strike, was so critical of the Government's handling of the whole issue that he refused to line up on the Government side.

Without doubt his reaction to the situation was partly instinctive. He naturally tended to take the weaker side, to support the under-dog, and his sympathies were with the miners who faced a cut in their far from exorbitant wages. Though the T.U.C. had taken the wrong course in calling a General Strike in support of the miners, he felt that the Government ought to reopen negotiations without waiting for the strike to end, since they too were in the wrong in allowing affairs to drift into such a mess. Nor can it be denied that in adopting a neutral attitude he had in mind the possibility that if the strike were prolonged the services of a mediator might be desirable, and this was a part which in the past he had frequently played successfully in industrial disputes.

On 3rd May, when the General Strike began, the Liberal "Shadow Cabinet" considered the situation and agreed that the Government was gravely to blame, but must be supported in any necessary action to resist the General Strike and maintain the nation's essential services. It

was not, however, decided that the Government should be supported in a refusal to reopen negotiations until the strike was called off. But next day Lord Oxford made in the House of Lords a speech offering unconditional support to the Government in its resistance to the General Strike, and L.G. felt so out of sympathy with this attitude that when invited to attend another meeting of the Shadow Cabinet on 10th May, he wrote to Sir Godfrey Collins saying that he could not see his way to join in declarations which condemned the General Strike while refraining from criticism of the Government, nor could he support the Government in an absolute refusal to negotiate until the strike was called off. So, to avoid having a difference with Lord Oxford about his speech, he would absent himself from the Shadow Cabinet meeting.

Lord Oxford's friends were swift to point out to him that here was clear evidence that Lloyd George was up to his tricks again, taking his own line in defiance of his Party leader and seeking an opportunity to play for his own hand. There was, of course, some truth in this. All through his political career Lloyd George had taken whatever line seemed to him the right one, whether it was approved by the leaders of the Party or not. He had fought with Gladstone, with Rosebery, on occasion even with Campbell-Bannerman. He had waged almost single-handed warfare against the Boer War. If in the reforming years between 1906 and 1914 he and Asquith had generally worked smoothly together, it was because Lloyd George, who was very much the initiator and driving force in most of that reform programme, was pushing a sympathetic leader on in front of him. Asquith had kept in line with him, rather than he with Asquith, and had given him generous confidence and support in his daring projects. Such independence of the party leader is by no means uncommon in politics, and many examples of it could be cited, alike in the Conservative, the Liberal and the Labour Party.

Lloyd George's motives in remaining neutral during the General Strike were no doubt rather mixed, and some were far from blame-worthy, but his attitude found little sympathy or support, even among his most loyal allies. It was, however, a passive, not an active, role that he played, and the worst that could be cited in an indictment against him was that he had declined the invitation to the Shadow Cabinet meeting of 10th May, and had forecast in the fortnightly article he was at that time writing for an American press syndicate that the strike might prove a long-drawn-out affair, with disastrous consequences to British trade. He could not be charged with any public defiance of the titular Liberal leader.

Vivian Phillips, however, and the other men around Lord Oxford who were thirsting for Lloyd George's blood, felt that the Lord had now delivered him into their hands, and persuaded Oxford to send Lloyd

George a severe and censorious reprimand for his crimes of failing to come to the Shadow Cabinet, of hinting in his letter at disagreement with Oxford's speech in the Lords, and of suggesting in his American article that the strike would be long and disastrous.

From his own standpoint, Lord Oxford was certainly justified in disapproving of L.G.'s behaviour during the General Strike. Whether from any standpoint he was wise in dragging the ex-Prime Minister to the pillory and publicly castigating him may be doubted. Lloyd George defended his course in a long letter, claiming that his attitude throughout had been in accord with the Shadow Cabinet's views of 3rd May and with the plea put forward by the Archbishop of Canterbury for the immediate resumption of negotiations, and that his absence from the Shadow Cabinet had been a discreet attempt to avoid precisely that internal dissension in the Liberal Party which Oxford was now enforcing on it. As for the American article, he quoted the view of it which C. P. Scott, the venerable Liberal editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, had published in that journal:

"It is just such an article as any sensible and moderately minded man might have written, and though it is unlikely that Mr. Churchill would have permitted its publication in the *British Gazette*, the Archbishop of Canterbury would certainly have been ready to give it his blessing."

Lloyd George ended by offering to meet Oxford and the rest of his colleagues to discuss the whole position. The offer was not accepted. Instead, Oxford wrote to the Liberal Whip, Sir Godfrey Collins, to inform him that Lloyd George, by declining to attend the Shadow Cabinet on 10th May, had in effect resigned from that body. This was a sentence of excommunication, and Runciman, Simon, Vivian Phillips, Cowdray, Pringle, and the rest of L.G.'s foes must have jubilantly thought they at last had their abhorred enemy well and truly crushed.

For the moment it seemed that they might be right. All the other Liberal antagonists of Lloyd George rushed into the arena to trample on what they took to be a prostrate form. Lord Gladstone published a long letter, complaining of the difficulty he had experienced in getting money for Liberal candidates from the Lloyd George Fund. A. G. Gardiner gave a Liberal audience in Birmingham his account of the whole affair, justifying the expulsion of L.G. from the counsels of the Party. The National Liberal Federation and the Women's Liberal Federation passed resolutions reaffirming their loyalty to Lord Oxford. Surely Lloyd George was finished?

King Canute, egged on by foolish counsellors, tried vainly to order

back the tide. Lord Oxford's effort to sweep away Lloyd George was no less ill-advised. For the only vital energy and forward-looking purpose within the shattered remnants of the Liberal Party were represented by Lloyd George and the men who rallied round him. He still retained his position as chairman of the Liberal M.P.s; his busy offices in Old Queen Street; his very real Fund, a much more solid asset than the paper fund which, despite Vivian Phillips' efforts, failed to materialize at Abingdon Street; and his Land and Nation League, which had an up-to-date policy to preach, and was hard at work throughout the constituencies, with speakers, pamphlets and its own newspapers. For a few months more Lord Oxford and his henchmen lingered on in the barrenness of titular authority, while the official party machinery creaked wearily over, impelled only by a faded pride in the past and a sour hatred of the noisy, modern installation at Old Queen Street. On 14th October Lord Oxford addressed to J. A. Spender, the President of the National Liberal Federation, a letter resigning the Party leadership. It was not Lloyd George but himself that he had driven out by his edict of excommunication.

The General Strike, which had furnished the pretext for this tragic squabble, had lasted only nine days; but the coal stoppage dragged on for months. A memorandum by Herbert Samuel, proposing a compromise solution of it, had been accepted by the T.U.C. as an excuse for ending the strike, but the miners would not agree to its terms, and the mine-owners thereupon fixed their own terms, from which they would not budge. Starvation gradually sent the miners drifting back to the pits, and in November their leaders had no option but to accept the terms laid down by the owners. It was a sorry business, which left a legacy of great bitterness among the miners—bitterness which was not lessened by the fact that the long stoppage had seriously impaired British coal trade with overseas countries, and from this time on unemployment was heavy in the mining areas, especially those such as South Wales, which largely depended on foreign trade. Repeated but unavailing protests were made by Lloyd George, alike in Parliament and in the country, at the biased and unfair way in which the Government played its part in this dispute.

If vitality was ebbing in the official Liberal headquarters at Abingdon Street, it was abundant at Old Queen Street, and attracted to itself whatever activity still stirred in the Party. Such activity was most evident in the Liberal Summer School movement.

Liberalism has always appealed to progressive-minded intellectuals, and a group of these, organized by a brilliant young Manchester Liberal, Col. T. F. Tweed, held a rally at Grasmere in the summer of 1921 to discuss Liberal policy in relation to the problems of the day. The School

was most successful, and next year it met again at Oxford, to spend nine days studying a comprehensive list of topics, and hearing addresses on them from Liberal leaders. Tweed gathered round him a strong Executive Committee, and the Liberal Summer School at Oxford became an annual institution. It held a strong appeal for the younger and more thoughtful people who took an interest in politics, and its studies of current topics made valuable contributions to political thinking. It devoted special attention to problems of industry, of wages and of employment, and of the proper relation of the State to these matters.

The Summer School movement originated among the Independent Liberals. But with the union of the two wings of the Party for the 1923 Election, contact was opened up between the leaders of the movement and Lloyd George, who gave the valedictory address at the Oxford Summer School of 1924. Both L.G. and the movement were refreshingly alive, among so much in current Liberalism that was torpid or moribund, and they naturally drew together. When in the autumn of 1925 Lloyd George founded his Land and Nation League, he succeeded in persuading Col. Tweed to join him as his chief organizer, and he also drew more firmly into his orbit the other more active spirits in the group which ran the School.

It was not, therefore, surprising that when the work of the Land Enquiry Committee had been completed and its findings accepted, in a somewhat modified form, by the Party Convention, Lloyd George should decide to turn the searchlight upon those industrial problems of which the Summer School had been making a special study. He set up a Committee to carry out a new Enquiry into questions of business organization, industrial relations, national development and national finance. It was a powerful Committee, including some of the country's foremost economists, such as Walter Layton, Hubert Henderson and J. Maynard Keynes; industrialists with a special concern for social service, like Seebohm Rowntree, E. D. Simon and E. H. Gilpin; and well-known political figures.

The Liberal Industrial Inquiry (with the last word spelt with an I, lest the body's initials should give enemies a handle for witty defamation) started its work in the summer of 1926 and for eighteen months met constantly in London and at Lloyd George's new home of Bron-y-de, Churt, to hammer out a sound industrial policy which the Liberal Party could put before the nation. Eagar again acted as Secretary to the Inquiry, supported by Jules Menken and Hubert Phillips, that master of many subjects, from economics, poetry and mathematical puzzles to humorous journalism and contract bridge. Hutments which had been erected in the Bron-y-de grounds housed the experts when they gathered there for their conferences, and Lloyd George's large library grew familiar with the throng

of prominent people, discussing and smoking till the atmosphere became overthick for the liking of L.G., who was a fresh-air fiend. "Which will you have, gentlemen," he asked them one bitterly cold day, with his hand on the window, "fresh air, or fug?" "Fug!" was their unanimous verdict.

The Inquiry was completed by the end of 1927, and was published in the new year in a thick, yellow-coloured volume entitled *Britain's Industrial Future*, familiarly known as the "Yellow Book". Following the precedent established for the Land Policy, a Liberal Convention was held in March to examine the Report of the Inquiry. The Committee's recommendations were approved by this Convention with but little alteration, and became an official part of Liberal policy.

The industrial reforms urged by the Committee were not Socialism, though they contemplated an extended exercise of public control over services that had become national and over industries that had combined into monopolies. In practical detail they were far ahead of any proposals which even the Labour Party had framed for industrial reform—for a vague assertion of the intention to nationalize an industry is not in itself anywhere near a practical policy. Brailsford, a Left-wing Socialist, wrote of them that a Socialist "would secretly rejoice if the whole of this wide programme could be realized. The Labour programme is by comparison sketchy". In the years that followed it was interesting to mark how often earnest young Conservatives, groping round for some plan of industrial reform, would announce their new idea with proud surprise, only to learn that it had already been worked out in much fuller detail in the "Yellow Book".

It can be claimed for Lloyd George that in the years from 1923 to 1928 he was responsible for securing the critical study of the problems of Coal and Power, Agricultural Revival, Urban Reform, and Industrial Reconstruction, and the working out of policies which, if they had been put into effect, would have secured very marked improvements in all these fields of national activity. Indeed, the bulk of such reforms as have in fact been carried out in subsequent years—some of them under stress of wartime emergency—were recommended in the policy proposals of those years of research and inquiry.

Meantime, the Liberal Party had been quietly and inevitably flooding over to Lloyd George. In the autumn of 1926 he suggested through Col. Tweed to the Liberal Organization Committee that the Land and Nation League should take over the financing of Liberal candidates in rural constituencies. This started a fresh discussion as to the possibility of combining the Party's Funds, out of which there emerged a proposal to set up a new Organization Committee, through which Lloyd George would furnish sufficient funds to put in the field a full list of Liberal

candidates at the next election, and to maintain the Party's official headquarters and Publication Department. In its finally agreed form, Lloyd George's offer was to place in the hands of the Administrative Committee, free of any conditions, a capital sum adequate to finance the candidates in the next election, and a sufficient income to cover the estimated expenses of the Liberal headquarters in all its activities—these expenses to have precedence over the Land and Nation League in their claim on his Fund.

The acceptance of this offer was indignantly described by L.G.'s irreconcilable opponents as the sale to him of the Party, and a new separatist movement, the "Liberal Council", was promptly formed by them. It is worthy of note that, although Lloyd George will go down to history burdened with the charge of having split the Liberal Party, the leading figures among his opponents were repeatedly guilty of setting up schisms within the Party. Thus in 1902 the so-called Liberal Imperialists, who refused to commit themselves to Campbell-Bannerman's leadership and took little interest in Irish Home Rule, Welsh Disestablishment, Land Reform and other policies advocated by the more Radical element, formed an independent movement called the Liberal League. Two of its Vice-Presidents were Asquith and Sir Edward Grey. Now Grey once again became the leader of a dissident group, as the President of the Liberal Council; and if he did not this time share his position with Asquith, he was at the head of a clique of Asquithians.

The Council was officially constituted as an organization of Liberals who refused to accept Lloyd George's leadership. It was thus an interesting echo of the old Liberal League. Warned by the fate of the "Radical Group", which had nailed Land Reform to its mast and had fallen to pieces when Lloyd George's Land Policy left it bannerless, the Liberal Council avowed no policy save pure Liberalism and antagonism to Lloyd George. It consisted mainly of a number of prominent and well-to-do Liberals such as Runciman, Maclean, Mallet, Rea, Pringle and Vivian Phillips, who disliked L.G. It never became a popular movement with any substantial mass of support among the rank and file, by means of which it could exert control over the Party.

The peace and unity of a party may be impaired by either positive or negative forces; by rebels or reformers who try to drive it along a course which it is not, or is not yet, willing to take; or by bigots and pedants who start heresy hunts and refuse to associate with those whom they regard as "unsound". If Lloyd George was himself a disruptive force of the first kind, his party suffered acutely from the second type of trouble-maker, whose effect is far more deadening and corrupting. One can only lament that the stainless correctitude of men so honourable as Viscount Grey should be allied with a censoriousness of disposition which made them repeatedly lead destructive party schisms.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### "WE CAN CONQUER UNEMPLOYMENT"

THE concordat which Lloyd George negotiated in January 1927 with the official headquarters of the Party included an arrangement for the setting up at Abingdon Street of a new Organization Committee, to which the money he had promised from his Fund should be paid over. Colonel Tweed became the Organizing Secretary of this Committee. The Land and Nation League at Old Queen Street was merged with a new Liberal Campaign Department, which had the task of running the Party campaign in collaboration with the new Organization Committee.

As Director of this Campaign Department, Lloyd George installed at Old Queen Street a middle-aged Scottish physician, Dr. Hunter, whose skill in organizing the Liberal forces in Dumfries had greatly impressed L.G. when he went to speak there. The selection was characteristic of L.G.'s promptness in snapping up ability when he came across it; but it may be doubted whether the doctor was wise in yielding to L.G.'s pressure and throwing up his long-established Dumfries practice, among folk by whom he was greatly honoured and beloved, to enter the rough and tumble of political organization. He was a gentle, courteous figure, but his health was imperfect and he hardly had the toughness of fibre that was needed for standing up to his Chief's imperious and impatient temper. The strain of the next two years at Old Queen Street told heavily on him and the unwonted activity probably shortened his life.

The Campaign Department buzzed with activity. An army of paid speakers was maintained, to address meetings indoors and out of doors, up and down the country. Pamphlets and leaflets poured out, and three weekly newspapers were issued—the *Land News*, *Industrial News* and *Mining News*—to carry propaganda on behalf of the policies which Lloyd George was pressing on the nation. A Leasehold Reform Association was promoted, ostensibly non-party, to urge legislation on the lines of the Brown Book recommendations about leasehold questions, and a Trade and Industry Association to propagate Free Trade ideas. The next General Election was due not later than 1929, and Lloyd George was determined upon a supreme effort to restore the Liberal Party to its old place as one of the two major parties—if possible, the majority party—in the State.

With this object he set on foot yet one more programme-framing Committee. The most serious social problem of the hour was the per-

sistence of unemployment. Before the General Strike and Coal Stoppage the number out of work had been slowly and steadily declining and had fallen below the million level. But those catastrophes checked the process, and large-scale unemployment involving over a million workers became endemic. This was alike a social tragedy for the victims and their families, and a reprehensible waste of national manpower. The Industrial Report had made recommendations for what might be described as long-distance remedies for this condition; for development of fresh markets abroad and reorganization of industry at home. But if the Liberal Party were successful at the polls in 1929 it would want, and would be expected, to produce an immediate programme to deal with the problem. Lloyd George had no intention of finding himself in the position of the Labour Government of 1924, with its lament that it could not produce schemes like rabbits out of a hat.

His principal helpers in the Industrial Inquiry were accordingly invited to set to work on a programme of measures which might bring swift alleviation of unemployment. These were to be based on the thesis that in a period of national unemployment the capital of the State should be used to put in hand works of capital development and reconstruction, which would serve the dual purpose of providing immediate employment for idle manpower and increasing national efficiency for industrial expansion in the future. At the same time, the greater national spending power resulting from putting wages into the pockets of those hitherto workless would quicken trade and industry and promote an expanding economy, thus counteracting the depression which caused unemployment.

This economic theory has now been generally accepted, and was in fact fundamental to the plans set on foot during the Second World War by Lord Woolton in his role as Minister of Reconstruction. Earlier, it was emphatically endorsed by a special Commission of the League of Nations, which made a study of the problem of unemployment. But when Lloyd George put it forward he was, as often happened, ahead of his time, and the very fact that he was the advocate of what is now approvingly described as an "expansionist" policy made it unacceptable to statesmen of rival parties. A deplorable amount of misplaced ingenuity was devoted during the next few years to proving that the expenditure of large sums on capital development and reconstruction in periods of depression would be quite useless as a means of combating unemployment.

The task of the new Committee was not to produce abstract economic arguments, but to prepare detailed plans of work that could be done; to find out just what was needed, how fast it could be put in hand and on what scale. The most authoritative expert advisers in the country were laid under contribution for this purpose. Being practical men, they saw

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the sound sense of the idea, and gladly allowed their brains to be picked and their knowledge to be utilized for the preparation of schemes. As the programme took shape it consisted not of mere vague suggestions that more roads, more houses, more telephones, more railway electrification and so on might be undertaken, but of precise schedules, detailed maps, financial calculations as to how much should be laid out on each category of project, how long the work would take, what employment it would provide.

This Inquiry, and the Liberal Campaign based on it, were conducted on the assumption that Liberals might win the next election and be in a position to carry out their plans. It could not, however, be ignored that there were other possibilities. If the Liberals failed to get a majority in the next Parliament, and were not even the strongest party, then it would probably fall to them to decide which of the two other parties they would support. As the other parties were well aware of this possibility, there was naturally a certain amount of private discussion, although in public each of the three parties protested its determination not to compromise with any other.

The situation within the Liberal Party was extremely delicate. Traditionally there was a sense of alliance with the Labour Party, which had originally grown up as a foster-child of the Liberals; and both were Left-wing parties, as opposed to the Tories on the Right. Asquith had not hesitated in 1924 to give the support of the Liberal Party to MacDonald, although the Tories, while without a clear majority, were much the largest party in the Commons. And it would be peculiarly difficult for L.G. to lead the Liberal Party to the Tory side, because his Coalition record was still a rock of offence to a large section, who would be quick to mark any sign of backsliding and denounce him as a relapsed heretic.

On the other hand, Lloyd George had most painful memories of the treatment the Liberals had received in 1924 from the Labour Government, and he was perfectly well aware that they sought to destroy the Liberal Party and inherit its vineyard. He had a very strong sympathy with the demands of Labour. He was indeed almost a Labour leader himself in the zeal with which he inclined to support the side of the workers. But the Labour Party had latterly ceased to be essentially a working-man's party, having been captured by the Socialists. Ready as he was to propose the nationalization of concerns which were conducting public services, Lloyd George was emphatically opposed to any system of universal Socialism. Speaking at a big Liberal Rally in the Albert Hall on 30th January, 1925, he had declared:

“You cannot trust the battle of freedom to Socialism. Socialism has no interest in liberty. Socialism is the very negation of liberty.

Socialism means the community in bonds. If you establish a Socialist community it means the most comprehensive, universal and pervasive tyranny that this country has ever seen. It is like the sand of the desert. It gets into your food, your clothes, your machinery, the very air you breathe. They are all gritty with regulations, orders, decrees, rules. That is what Socialism means."

At the Yarmouth Conference of the National Liberal Federation in October 1928, Lloyd George devoted much of his speech to an examination of the possible alternatives which might confront the nation and the Party after the General Election in the following year. Beneath a wealth of explanatory comment he was cautiously noncommittal. He did not rule out the danger of a coalition of Tories and Socialists designed to dish the Liberals:

"Believe me, if there is a combination of Socialists and Tories in the next Parliament it will not be the first time you have had it, either in Parliament or out of Parliament. You will not hear very much said about that, but it would be the realization of the dream of Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, who once upon a time said he had a natural affinity for the Tories. . . ."

As for a Liberal-Socialist pact, he pointed out that the Socialists had made it clear that under no conditions would they associate or co-operate or enter into any compact or understanding with Liberals "unless we swallow Socialism, horns, hoofs and all! We say at once we are not there, we never shall be there, unless we cease to be Liberals. Socialists are not equally emphatic about what they will do with the Tories."

The King's Government would of course have to be carried on, and if it proved necessary to support a minority government of one of the other Parties, the Liberals would try to ensure that as much good and as little harm as possible was done by it.

In a letter to his friend, C. P. Scott, Editor of the *Manchester Guardian*, on 30th April, 1929, just a month before the election, he wrote, discussing an article by Scott on party co-operation with Labour:

"everything depends on the interpretation that is put upon the word 'co-operation'. If it means that the Liberals in the House of Commons are to carry the ladder and hold it in its place for five years whilst the Socialists are up on the scaffolding doing all the building, then I am utterly against it. It would be the final blow to the Liberal Party. An agreed programme would not save the situation if the Socialists make a mess of the job, and I feel certain they would, because they have no men capable of handling a big task. . . ."

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“If it were a whole-hearted federation of the progressive interests in the House it would work out all right. It would end in evolving a united progressive party. But if we are to be ruled out of effective co-operation it would simply mean the reduction of the Liberal Party to a negligible faction in the State. That is why I am out and out opposed to any idea of Liberal members in the next Parliament putting a purely Socialist Government in power on any terms.”

Clearly Lloyd George would have preferred, if a Liberal Administration was out of the question, to make a working agreement with the Conservatives rather than with the Socialists. He was, in fact, taking soundings in this direction. On 18th February, 1929, he had an interview with his friend Winston Churchill, at that time Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Tory Government, to talk over the situation which might arise after the election. A note of their conversation is among his papers. Lloyd George correctly forecast that the Conservatives would drop to the second place, and urged that in such an event the Prime Minister should not hurry to resign before consultation had taken place with the Liberals, who were no more anxious than the Tories to see a Socialist Government in charge of the nation's affairs. The Liberals would of course want to impose conditions for any support they might offer: reform of the voting system; no tariffs on iron, steel, wool, or other commodities; reconstruction of the Ministry to clear out the more incompetent Ministers; and a real tackling of the unemployment problem on some such lines as Liberals were proposing.

Should the Conservatives return without a majority, MacDonald would certainly move a vote of no confidence, which the Liberals would as certainly support. They might, however, arrange to add an amendment saying that they also would have no confidence in an administration pledged to nationalize all the means of production, distribution and exchange. That would free Baldwin from the duty of recommending the King to send for MacDonald, and after an audience of the Party Leaders with His Majesty, an arrangement on the lines L.G. suggested might be made for the carrying on of the Government. This suggestion, he was able to say, fully and fairly represented the views of the Liberal Leaders, but of course no bargain could be struck before the election.

The Government decided not to wait until its fifth year ran fully out, but to hold an election in May 1929. On learning of this, Lloyd George's committee of experts worked night and day to complete their schemes for dealing with the unemployment problem, and early in March 1929 their Report was published as a 6d. booklet with the confident title, *We Can Conquer Unemployment*. The booklet, which set out in precise detail the various schemes which could be forthwith put in hand to

increase employment and start an expanding economy, was printed in immense quantities and on sale on every bookstall.

With the publication of this programme, Lloyd George once again became without question the dominant figure in British politics. Comment on his unemployment policy filled the Press, and most of it was favourable, for the proposals were so obviously wise, and it was known that they had been framed on the advice of the nation's foremost economists, financiers and consultant engineers. He expounded the scheme to a crowded meeting in the Albert Hall on 26th March, and large audiences listened to relays of the speech in the Kingsway Hall and in a dozen provincial towns. There was a marked, if temporary, increase in Liberal unity on the basis of the unemployment policy, which was supported by Runciman and other members of the Liberal Council no less firmly than by L.G.'s following.

The General Election drew near, and the issue of Unemployment filled the centre of the stage. The Tories, who had done nothing to cure it, were driven to defend themselves by trying to pour cold water on the Liberal programme. The Labour party took the line that they themselves were out to cure unemployment, and that Lloyd George's policy was mainly stolen from them. It was, they said, the right policy but in the hands of the wrong party. This was an adroit argument, for it tended to divert to Labour many votes of electors attracted by the Liberal policy, thus reaping a harvest from the field Lloyd George had sown.

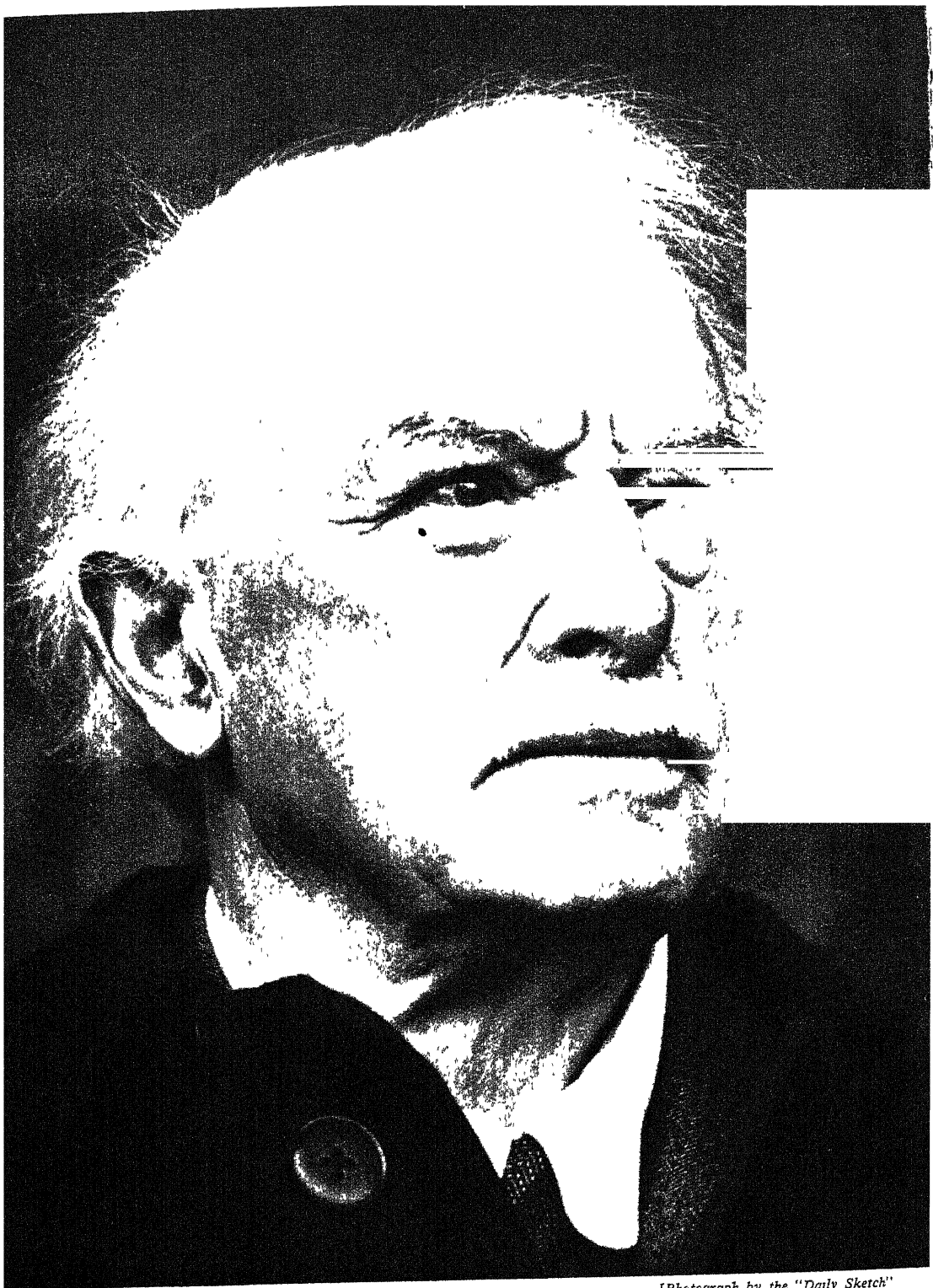
Into the 1929 election fight Lloyd George put all that he had. He realized that it was probably the last chance of reinstating the Liberal Party as a major political force. His Fund was poured out like water. Mass meetings were organized and at the last moment a great advertising campaign was carried out by a firm of professional experts. Lloyd George himself addressed great meetings up and down the country. His son Gwilym and his daughter Megan were standing in Pembroke and Anglesey, and he visited their constituencies to rouse enthusiasm among their supporters. In the middle of May he travelled down from Criccieth by a special train to make speeches in Cardiff and Swansea, and the reception he was given in both towns showed that, while the electors mostly intended to vote Labour, they held him, regardless of his Party, in little short of religious veneration as their greatest Welsh hero. Both halls were packed in every corner, and the streets between the stations and the halls were a solid throng of people, scores of thousands of them, who had been massing there all through the day, and in Swansea had to wait long into the evening to catch just a brief glimpse of their hero as he drove past, to and from his meeting. If Lloyd George failed to gain the political victory for which he was striving, his personal triumph at this election was beyond any description.



[Photograph by courtesy of "News-Chronicle"]  
A Land campaign at Middlesbrough

[Photograph by Fox Photos]  
Apples in the Bron Y De orchard





*[Photograph by the "Daily Sketch"]*

David Lloyd George on his eightieth birthday

The election results, however, were bitterly disappointing. There may possibly dawn some tranquil era in British politics when a Centre Party will flourish, drawing to itself from left and right hosts of supporters who are weary of extremes. But in 1929 those who disliked the Tory Government voted Labour as the surest way of turning it out; while anti-Socialists voted Tory as their most emphatic way of rejecting the creed they abhorred. The Liberals, it is true, retained over 5,000,000 suffrages, or nearly a quarter of the total number cast, but they won therewith only 59 seats, or less than one-tenth of the whole. Most of the fights were three-cornered—there were 1,729 candidates for 615 seats—and in more than half of them the successful candidate won by a minority vote, getting fewer than half the votes cast in his constituency.

As Lloyd George had forecast, Labour moved up to first place with 288 members, the Tories dropping to 260. Baldwin flinched at the prospect of facing Parliament in a minority, ~~on~~ of seeking Liberal support on the kind of terms at which Lloyd George had hinted in his interview with Churchill. So, four days after the election, he resigned and advised the King to send for Ramsay MacDonald. Lloyd George and the Liberals were thus jockeyed without consultation into the position of giving a measure of support to a Labour Administration; for when Parliament assembled, the Tory Amendment to the Address advocated Protection, on which of course the Liberals could not vote with them, and the Government duly obtained its majority. Moreover, the programme it put forward was very much on the lines which, after the election and Baldwin's resignation, Lloyd George had forecast for it in a speech at the National Liberal Club as the sort of programme which Liberals could support.

Unemployment policy was, of course, the issue which the Liberals did their best in the new Parliament to keep to the fore. J. H. Thomas had been put in charge of the Labour Government's programme for tackling this issue, and he started various schemes of limited scope. It was soon evident that they would not in total make much impression on the mass of unemployment, which was stubbornly remaining above the million mark. When in opposition, MacDonald had urged an all-Party Committee to examine the problem, but he now temporized when he was reminded of his suggestion. Lloyd George stated on 25th November, 1929, that he had done all he could, and had promised the Prime Minister full Liberal co-operation in solving unemployment, but after six months of office no substantial progress had been registered. Thomas's schemes would not find work for even 50,000 men during the coming winter.

An unanticipated darkness now began to gather over the employment landscape. In October 1929 a boom on the New York Stock Exchange, which had been mounting higher and higher all the summer, suddenly

collapsed, to be followed by a slump which threw the United States for years into the depths of a trade depression involving millions in ruin, and spreading disaster through the civilized world. Its effects were quickly felt in Britain, whose economy depends so intimately upon the state of world trade. The cautious, small-scale plans for creating work which were all that the Labour Government would venture to undertake were as ineffectual to deal with the crisis as a child's squirt to save a house on fire. Unemployment, which in June 1929, when the Labour Government took office, stood at just over a million, rose by the end of July 1930 to over two millions. By the end of that year it was more than two-and-a-half millions, and continued above that level for the next two-and-a-half years.

In June 1930 MacDonald at last decided to summon the three-party conference on unemployment about which he had so long hesitated. Lloyd George promptly accepted the invitation and announced his readiness to give all the help he could. He had already, on 28th May, pledged full Liberal support to the Government if they chose to carry out their election programme of work for the unemployed. Baldwin, not surprisingly, declined MacDonald's invitation. The Tory Party had no plans for remedying unemployment, but confined itself to disparaging any proposals made by Liberals or Socialists.

To the Conference which followed, Lloyd George took with him as his advisers the Marquess of Lothian—who as Philip Kerr had during his Premiership been one of his secretaries—and Seebohm Rowntree, the foremost social investigator and reformer in Britain. They brought with them to the discussion the emergency programme which had been set out in *We Can Conquer Unemployment*, which in principle secured general approval, and undertook to revise it in consultation with the Government representatives with a view to developing these emergency measures as part of a fuller policy for industrial revival and agricultural reform.

The Labour Government was, however, rather unresponsive in its attitude to Lloyd George's advances, and for weeks would tell him nothing that had not already been publicly stated about its plans or ideas for a practical programme. It was not until the end of August that any inside information about its Housing or Agricultural proposals was given to him, and then only after he had sent a strongly worded letter of protest to MacDonald about the delay. As promptly as he could Lloyd George and his colleagues set to work in the light of this information to work out a restatement of the original Liberal plans, revised in terms of the latest position, with additional proposals for securing an increase in industrial output, conversion of the National Debt to a lower interest rate, encouragement for agriculture and new schemes of regional development. A summary of these proposals was sent by Lloyd George to MacDonald on 3rd October, 1930, and the full memorandum on 10th October. At the

Annual Conference of the National Liberal Federation at Torquay, in the same month, Lloyd George outlined the plans and secured their endorsement by the Federation, and its approval of his co-operation with the Labour Government in seeking to get them carried out.

MacDonald raised various points of criticism after studying the Memorandum, and showed himself characteristically unwilling to commit himself to doing anything active to put them into effect. He agreed, however, to their publication, and on 4th November, 1930, they were issued by L.G. as a sixpenny booklet, under the title of *How to Tackle Unemployment*, which was again widely distributed to the public. But even with the popular support which Lloyd George thus roused for his plans, and with the sombre swelling of the unemployment figures, MacDonald could not be induced to take vigorous action. In June he had taken over from J. H. Thomas the charge of unemployment policy, with Vernon Hartshorn as his deputy, and while he pleaded himself too busy and tired to attend to it, he carefully blocked any efforts by Hartshorn to start things really moving. For this there were two reasons, both proceeding, not from the facts of the situation, but from the peculiarities of MacDonald's temperament. He was constitutionally disposed to talk rather than to act. In the long catalogue of reforms and progressive developments which pack the calendars of the twentieth century, it is hard to find one for which he can claim credit—except that of constructing the modern Labour Party, and then doing his best to smash it. And he had an intensely arrogant and jealous temper. He could not tolerate the prospect of Lloyd George sharing the credit for the action taken to remedy unemployment.

His jealousy and suspicion of Lloyd George had a special foundation. It was an open secret that a number of his followers in Parliament, and a host of them in the country, would have been glad to exchange Lloyd George for him as the leader of the Labour Party. From their point of view it would have been a highly profitable exchange, for while they would not have got Socialism from Lloyd George, they would have got an abundance of really progressive legislation and improvement of their conditions, such as he had in fact carried through in pre-war years in collaboration with the Labour M.P.s, and had since advocated in his Reports on Coal and Power, Agriculture, Housing, and Industrial Reform. Following a speech which Lloyd George made in the House on 12th February, 1931, about Unemployment, the veteran George Lansbury wrote to him next day a long letter, appealing to him to come over to the Labour side.

“I have thought of writing to you, many times, during the past few years. Your speech last night has finished my thinking, so here goes.

"Why won't you join the Labour Party? 'Labour and the Nation' is only Socialism reduced to everyday expedients. You are willing as an outsider to help us to put these expedients into operation. Your help would be invaluable, *as one of us*. As matters now stand, we gibe, humour, abuse, coax each other to the bewilderment of all who read or hear us. . . .

"People have said you are opportunist, and will take any line that suits you. At times I have thought and said so. But these past months' experience and your observations last night compel me to believe you are as sincere as any of your critics. . . . I can't believe of you anything worse than of myself and because this is so I want you in the best place for doing good work, and that I am sure is in the Labour Party. All your people in the House would not come with you, but those who count, the young in mind, those who have faith in our common stock, they will come and in any case your coming would crown a progressive life with the knowledge that as the world of thought and action moved on, you never closed your mind, and when the hour came and you were needed, you flung aside all thought of self and came over to the new groupings of true Liberalism and progressive thought, taking your place once more as a pioneer among pioneers. . . ."

Lloyd George had no intention of changing sides. He was no more willing now to join the Socialists than he had been in Coalition days to accept the pressing invitations of some of his allies to join the Tories. He might not be approved as an orthodox Liberal by the self-appointed pundits of that creed, but if there were both red and blue streaks in his political faith, its ground colour was essentially Liberal.

It was, however, growing clear by the spring of 1931 that MacDonald's minority Government was hardly strong enough to cope with the very difficult problems confronting the nation. National Expenditure was continuing at an uncomfortably high level, and in particular the heavy burden of unemployment was piling up liabilities for the Unemployment Fund. There was a spreading world-wide depression of trade, resulting from the slump in the United States. Germany was finding it impossible to keep up her reparation payments, now that her ability to borrow more money from America had come to an end.

On 11th February a Liberal motion was carried in the House of Commons for the appointment of an Economy Committee to make proposals for all practicable and legitimate reductions in the national expenditure consistent with the efficiency of the services. The Committee was set up under the chairmanship of Sir George May, and ultimately

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reported at the end of July. Before that, it was known that drastic and unpalatable economies would be recommended.

The Government's weakness started various people on a course of backstairs intrigue for a fresh alignment of political groupings whereby the inheritance might be secured to them. A considerable section of the Liberal members increasingly disliked their role of support to the Labour administration, and began to look across to the Right, and angle for a link-up with the Conservatives. Sir John Simon, hitherto one of the high priests of Liberal orthodoxy, hinted on 4th March, 1931, in a speech at Manchester, that he might be willing to compromise on Free Trade; and Hore-Belisha set to work to draw together under Simon's aegis as many as he could of the dissatisfied Liberals in the Commons.

Lloyd George was well aware of this intrigue, but he would have nothing to do with it. He was sincerely and desperately anxious to bring about action to deal with unemployment, and he frankly did not envisage Baldwin doing anything effective in that field. There seemed still some hope of driving and bullying the Labour Government into action, so he was loth to turn them out and put the Tories in their place.

MacDonald was himself carrying on secret negotiations with both the other parties. If Lloyd George was willing to consider giving firmer guarantees of Liberal support, or even a Lib.-Lab. coalition to deal with the grave national and international situation which had arisen, the Tories were negotiating with MacDonald through the mediation of Lord and Lady Londonderry in an effort to entice him to enter into alliance with them.

In the early summer, Lloyd George submitted to MacDonald a proposal for a parliamentary understanding between the Liberal and Labour Parties whereby the Liberals would give general support to the Government for carrying through an agreed programme on Peace, Unemployment, Housing, Factory Legislation and Agriculture, on the same free and independent terms as those on which the Irish and Labour Parties had supported the Liberals between 1906 and 1914. There were to be separate negotiations about the Mines Bill and the Trades Union Bill, and the Labour Government was to bring in a measure to reform the electoral system.

As the summer drew on, the situation became more critical. The Austrian national bank, the Credit Anstalt, was threatened with bankruptcy in June through the failure of French banks to furnish their agreed share of support for Austrian finances, and only an emergency loan from the Bank of England saved the situation. On 6th July, France and America agreed to the suspension for a year of all reparation payment from Germany and all war-debt payments to the United States. A Seven-Power Conference in London, from 20th to 23rd July, agreed on measures to

save Germany from complete financial collapse, and arranged that the sums she had borrowed on short-term credit should be converted to long-term loans. This widening circle of impending bankruptcy made bankers and financiers very nervous, and there was a sharp rise in public criticism of the British Government for its heavy expenditure on doles. Talk began to spread about the desirability of forming a National Government to handle the crisis. On 17th July, Baldwin made public reference to this in a speech at Hull, but asserted that an essential condition would be the acceptance of protection for the home market.

Lloyd George would have been willing to join in a National Government on the terms which he had suggested in 1929 to Churchill for co-operation with the Tories, and to MacDonald in the early summer of 1931 for co-operation with Labour; and secret conversations with MacDonald were being carried on as to the possibility of this when two events simultaneously occurred which gave the Prime Minister what must have seemed to him an almost unbelievably happy chance to break away from dependence on the Liberals and their uncomfortably energetic leader, and at the same time to escape from his bondage to the trade union figures among his Labour associates, and to ally himself with the Tories with whom he had avowed a natural affinity.

At the end of July Lloyd George, whose health had been affected for some time, suddenly was taken critically ill and had to undergo a very serious operation. His illness coincided with the issue of the report of the May Committee on National Economy, which asserted that there was a prospective deficit of £120 million in the coming year's Budget that must be made good by drastic cuts in the pay and pensions of the fighting Services, police, teachers, Civil Service; cuts in the programme of Defence works, road development, agricultural research, afforestation, Empire Marketing and Colonial Development; and reductions in unemployment benefit, health insurance payments and education grants.

The suggestion of budgetary insolvency started a flight of capital from sterling, which brought to light the awkward fact that certain banking houses in the City had been lending abroad on long terms while borrowing on short term, and when the short-term loans fell in, were unable to meet them. This created an acute financial crisis, making it necessary either to hypothecate the country's overseas assets or secure large loans from France and the United States. MacDonald played the situation adroitly. He presented his Cabinet with formidable proposals for economies, which he declared were being made a condition by the American bankers for the loan which Britain was seeking. The Cabinet could stomach most of these, but drew the line at the proposed heavy cut in unemployment benefit.

MacDonald is reported to have insisted that the Americans made

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this a *sine qua non*—which they subsequently denied—and on this issue collected the resignations of the Cabinet. They took it for granted that he would stand with his Party and join them in abandoning office. But with their resignations in his pocket he went on 24th August to Buckingham Palace and obtained the King's authority to form a National Government on a comprehensive basis to meet the financial emergency. He then conferred with Baldwin and Sir Herbert Samuel, who was acting as Liberal leader in Lloyd George's absence, and arranged to form a Government with the Tories and Liberals. He brought with him from the shattered Labour Party his Chancellor, Philip Snowden, and his Dominions Secretary, J. H. Thomas. Four Tory leaders—Baldwin, Hoare, Neville Chamberlain and Cunliffe-Lister—and two Liberals—Samuel and Reading—completed his new Cabinet. The rest of the Labour Ministers and the rank and file of the Party he left behind him, openly delighted at last to be free from their unpolished ways and to be welcomed in high society. “Tomorrow all the duchesses will want to kiss me!” he cried gleefully to Snowden, on the night when he forced his Cabinet to resign.

It was widely recognized that MacDonald had only been able to carry through this manœuvre because Lloyd George was for the time being *hors de combat*. Had he been fit and active he would have been able to prevent such a trick being played, and if a National Government had still been formed it would have been openly arranged with the concurrence of the Labour Party. It would have included Lloyd George, who would have seen through the designs of the bankers, who were working in conjunction with the Tory leaders in the financial advice they furnished to the Government. MacDonald might well have hesitated to betray and abandon his Party if Lloyd George had been on the scene, capable of forming a Left-wing coalition of Labour and Liberal members.

But Lloyd George was for the time being a helpless invalid, and MacDonald wrote him a letter expressing a regret, which it is hard to believe was genuine, that his collaboration could not be secured in the formation of the new Government. And Lloyd George, unable to intervene and careful not to interfere, sent back his good wishes for the nation's prosperity under the changed administration. MacDonald had emphatically declared that the National Government was no more than a temporary expedient to deal with the crisis, and when that task was ended it would be broken up. “The election which will follow will not be fought by the Government.” So with his father's approval, Major Gwilym Lloyd George took office in the Government as Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Trade.

While their leader was sick, the Liberal Parliamentary Party broke in two. The Right-wing group, organized by Hore-Belisha under Simons'

leadership, detached itself from the main body, now being led by Samuel, and allied itself with the Tories, saying that it would if necessary swallow the Tory policy of protective tariffs. Samuel and his followers were not prepared to go so far, and while declaring themselves ready to consider any emergency measures, maintained that as a permanent policy Free Trade was the only wise line for Britain.

Baldwin now began to insist that despite MacDonald's definite pledge to the contrary, the National Government must be continued and a General Election held to establish its parliamentary majority. Tory prospects could hardly be brighter. The Labour Party had lost its leaders and was under a cloud, being widely held to blame for the financial crisis. The Liberal Party was split in two, its redoubtable leader on a sick bed. The chance was not to be missed.

By the beginning of October it was known that Baldwin was carrying his point, and that an election to give the National Government a permanent status was in prospect. Lloyd George, who had successfully weathered his operation, was now slowly convalescing at Churt. On 4th October, Sir Herbert Samuel and Sir Walter Layton came down to see him and discuss the situation. They reached complete agreement with his refusal to concur in the holding of a General Election, and his insistence that the Liberals should withdraw from the Government if an election were forced on them.

MacDonald had already written L.G. offering to come and see him, and suggesting that an election was inevitable. He came down next morning. Lloyd George, who was now able to walk about, knew that MacDonald expected to find him a bedridden invalid, so when the Premier was nearly due to arrive L.G. donned his Tyrolean cloak and took a walk round the garden, coming back into the house to greet his visitor, and looking the picture of health. "How Ramsay's face fell when he saw me!" he commented afterwards.

MacDonald pleaded that he was practically committed to give the Tories their general election, though he said that the Government would not carry a protective tariff in the new Parliament without full Cabinet agreement. Lloyd George insisted that the election was unnecessary. He offered to travel to London by ambulance and be available there for consultation on the situation. When MacDonald had gone he telephoned Samuel to obtain his assurance that he and Reading would resist the proposal in the Cabinet. However, by midnight that evening they had given way and an election was decreed.

Lloyd George was furious, and felt that he had been betrayed. The Liberal Party was in hopeless confusion. Part of it had split off with Sir John Simon. The remainder was divided in opinion whether to continue to support MacDonald or not. Lloyd George had no doubts. He would

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have nothing more to do with the National Government, and, after consulting with him, Gwilym Lloyd George resigned his post at the Board of Trade. Liberalism was now broken into three sections—the Simonites, the Samuelites, and a small group which shared Lloyd George's view and broke away from the National Government.

The election was held on 27th October. The Labour Party was badly smashed. After losing 15 of its members who joined the National Government, it had 264 prior to the election. Only 52 came back to the new Parliament. The Conservatives, whose numbers rose from 263 to 471, obtained an overwhelming majority. The Liberals were in no shape for an electoral fight. They were only able to muster 160 candidates, and the three groups between them returned 72 members to the new Parliament, of whom the Independent Liberals led by Lloyd George were practically a family party of four: himself, his son and daughter, and Gwilym's brother-in-law, Goronwy Owen, the member for Caernarvon County. The other Liberals were still lined up with the National Government; the Simonites in unhesitating acceptance of whatever policy the Tory majority should decide to introduce, the Samuelites in uneasy acquiescence, accepting for the time being the Government Whip, but mentally reserving freedom of action. As Lloyd George had foreseen, by the 1931 election of the National Government Liberalism as a political force was reduced to impotence.

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE NEW DEAL

LOYD GEORGE himself was unable to take much part in the 1931 election. He set out his own position in a letter to his constituents in the Caernarvon Boroughs, which denounced the election as a Tory ramp, that exploited the national emergency for party ends; and on 15th October he made a broadcast speech from his home at Churt—his first over the B.B.C.—in which he stressed the peril to Free Trade implicit in the election, and urged Liberals to vote for the Free Trade candidate, even if he was Labour. He could not carry on his own constituency fight, but Dame Margaret took up the cudgels for him, and with her intimate knowledge of the people and her cheerfully stubborn defence of her sick husband—whose friendly attitude to the scapegoat Labour Party and breach with the National Government were far from popular with his supporters—she kept his seat safely for him, and at the same time helped their daughter Megan in her neighbouring constituency.

It is a noteworthy fact that through all his long political career, during most of which he was adored in Wales with an almost idolatrous worship, Lloyd George had to fight hard to retain his seat in the Caernarvon Boroughs. The only election in which he was unopposed was that of 1922, when the Coalition had just broken up. Every other election was a real contest—how real was shown after his passing, for in the 1945 election the constituency went Tory, at a time when the country as a whole was sweeping the Tories out of their firmest strongholds.

The election over, Lloyd George decided to abandon all idea of resuming the leadership of the Liberal Parliamentary Party. It would in any case be two or three months before he would be fit to return to the fray, and though he might by the sheer force and determination of his character have imposed his rule on the Liberal remnant, he was out of sympathy with a large section of them. The Simonite clique was probably irrecoverable, and the Samuelites were enjoying too much the novel experience of being on the winning side to be eager to come out into the wilderness with Lloyd George. In any case, the distinction of being a party leader meant nothing to him. It was merely a device for securing a following that would support him in the reforms he wanted to carry through. The Liberal Party after 1931 showed little sign of zeal or energy on behalf of any reforms, and was powerless to press them effectively, even if it had the will. So on 3rd November he wrote a letter to Samuel declining to stand again for the Party leadership, and on the following

day the Liberal M.P.s elected Samuel as their leader. The Simonites did not attend the meeting, and it was clear that they intended to drop all connection with the official Liberal Party.

Free from his political distractions, Lloyd George determined to take up the long postponed task of writing his *War Memoirs*, and a selection of his vast store of official papers was brought together for perusal with a view to a start being made. Before settling down to the work, however, he arranged to take a trip to Ceylon in the S.S. *Comorin* to complete his recovery, entrusting Miss Stevenson (then his secretary, later his second wife), and the present writer, with the task of starting the preparation of material against his return.

The boat sailed on 13th November. The weather was, however, very stormy, and much against his will he accepted the advice of his doctor and his friends not to face the Bay of Biscay, but to travel a little later to Marseilles and join the boat in the Mediterranean. The delay had its compensations, for on 18th November Gandhi, the famous Indian leader, who was in London, came down at his own request to have a talk with Lloyd George, and for three-and-a-half hours the strange little dark figure, wrapped in voluminous folds of white Khaddar, sat in the Churt library with the Welsh statesman discussing the problems of India and the Commonwealth. Two days later L.G. started off for Ceylon.

He did not stay there long. On a holiday he quickly grew restless, wanting to get back to work. On the way out he had a great reception at Bombay, where he made his first public speech since his illness. After about ten days in Ceylon he started home, visiting the sphinx on his way past Egypt, and running into a terrific storm in the mouth of the Channel. On 7th January he was back at Churt.

But the *War Memoirs* were not begun straight away. He decided first to produce a pamphlet on Reparations and War Debts, with the object of publishing it before the Lausanne Conference met in June to examine this problem. The statement of his views began, it is true, as a 20,000-word pamphlet; but after he had worked over it and inserted extracts from notes of some of the discussions he had held with continental statesmen about Reparations, to illustrate the difficulties of the question, and show the line he had consistently taken about it, the document had become a book, and was published on 21st March under the title: *The Truth about Reparations and War-Debts*. He argued the case for the total abolition of these old liabilities, urging that there was nothing worth salvage from German reparations, and that war debts should have been cancelled all round from the beginning. He suggested, however, that America might reasonably make her cancellation of the sums due to her conditional upon disarmament measures by the debtor Powers, as a means of preventing future wars. The book got very full and flattering

notice in the Press, but roused little controversy, as most people agreed with its conclusions.

Meantime, Lloyd George had made his first public appearance in London since his illness, at a reception arranged by the Junior Liberal Club at St. Ermin's Hotel, on 16th March. He made a speech sparkling with the familiar wit and oratorical skill, castigating the leaders of official Liberalism for their conduct in staying within the National Government. Next day he attended Parliament and took the oath and his seat. The view he took of the Liberal Party may be gauged by a pungent comment he made in a letter to Sir Herbert Lewis, written during his trip to Ceylon:

"Those who were responsible for Liberal direction after I was placed *hors de combat* surrendered all the passes to the enemy. The heights are now in command of the Protectionists: we are entirely at their mercy. The poor abject mob of Liberals are there cowering down in the swamps. They have entirely ceased to count. No one talks now of the extermination of the Liberal Party; for all practical purposes it is annihilated."

In April, however, there were the beginnings of a *rapprochement* between L.G. and the Liberals. Ramsay Muir played the part of a mediator, and at the Annual Meetings of the National Liberal Federation at Clacton, at the end of the month, a resolution on Party Independence was carried which contained a broad hint to the Liberals who still held office in the National Government that it was time they reconsidered their position. The hint was not immediately effective; but at the end of September, when the Government proposed to implement the decisions on Imperial Preference reached at the Ottawa Conference, Sir Herbert Samuel and his colleagues holding ministerial offices resigned, along with Snowden. The Simonites, of course, remained in the Government.

Lloyd George hesitated for a while before plunging into the work of his *War Memoirs*, and at first resolved to write a book on Disarmament. But by mid-August 1932 he was ready to start his greatest literary work, and as usual with him, took up the task with insatiable energy. What he was writing was not a history of the war, but his personal memoirs—a record of the part he had played and an account of the view he took of persons and events. Like everything else about Lloyd George, it was pugnacious and controversial. As has already been recorded, he was intensely critical of the way the war was conducted up to the point where he seized the reins himself, and on later reflection he found little reason to modify his criticisms. To what extent he was right or wrong in his strategical ideas can be left for military historians and experts to thrash out; but the case he made for those ideas in his *Memoirs* was very per-

suasive. The interest of the work was considerably increased by the fact that he had kept, practically intact, all his official papers, memoranda and correspondence, and was able to quote freely from these unpublished sources to confirm alike the historic facts and the attitude which he had adopted at the time to them.

The *Memoirs* eventually spread into six fat volumes, which were published at intervals from 1933 to 1936. The first two volumes appeared in September and October 1933, and created a front-line sensation in the whole of the Press. They stirred controversy, of course, and there were some who rushed forward to the defence of people whom he had criticized and policies he had condemned. But L.G.'s case was a strong one, and some of the ablest contemporary military experts, reviewing the evidence he had put together, admitted that he had substantially proved his contentions.

While the earlier volumes were being written Lloyd George devoted most of his attention to them, to the exclusion of current politics. This was hardly surprising, for he was entirely out of sympathy with the policy of the National Government, but had no party behind him to support him in criticizing it. The Samuelite Liberals, aware that they filled a rather undignified and dubious position, naturally looked back sourly and somewhat shamed at the leader who had stayed firmly by Liberal principles while they had deserted him for the fleshpots of office. They were quick to watch out for grounds to criticize him, and when, in the course of a debate in the House on 26th July, 1933, on the economic situation, Lloyd George intervened in defence of the British farmer, and asserted that if Free Trade was being abandoned and taxes put on what the farmer bought he ought to have the same protection for what he sold, Sir Percy Harris rashly published a letter in the *Manchester Guardian*, caustically rebuking him and appealing to Liberals to be firm in the faith. Lloyd George promptly sent in a reply, reaffirming his thesis and blaming the Liberal leaders for having let in the Protectionists.

"Sir Percy Harris is good enough to call me a chameleon. I have not changed my views. If I had, I should say so. But let him look around his own political cage with unjaundiced eyes and he will find himself led and surrounded by much more genuine specimens of those changeable reptiles who adapt their hue to their environment. Shortly before Sir Herbert Samuel and Sir Archibald Sinclair joined the National Government they were stout opponents of the Wheat Quota. The 'flame' that issued from their lips was not only 'alive' but scorching. Sir Herbert denounced the Quota as the worst form of Protection. He used the word 'Piracy' in reference to it, and so it is. I agree with him that a straightforward duty would have been less

objectionable and pernicious. Soon after this speech the Government of which he had become a member proposed this obnoxious form of Protectionist piracy. Not only did Sir Herbert vote for the measure, but at his request, on his behalf, and on behalf of the group he led, Sir Archibald Sinclair spoke strongly in its support. Who were the chameleons then? . . .

"I fear Sir Percy's smug and tardy wrath is stimulated rather by personal discrimination than by the high-principled 'humility' which he so over-emphasizes. Those who sold the pass of Free Trade at the last election without a struggle are the objects of Sir Percy's devotion. Those who fought in the defile against overwhelming odds are condemned as 'chameleons' who 'put their principles in cold storage' and failed 'to keep the flame alive' . . ."

During Lloyd George's long absence from the political scene there had been a whispering campaign against him which alleged that he was a broken invalid, who would never again be of any account. His attack on the Government on 26th July, and his riposte to Sir Percy Harris, showed doubters that the old vigour and pugnacity were unabated.

During the next twelve months he made an occasional speech in the country, or paid a visit to the House, but he did not take any very active part in politics. He maintained his special interest in agriculture and in disarmament. On 7th November, 1933, he spoke on this latter issue in the House, deploring the failure of the Disarmament Conference to reach agreement on positive measures of arms reduction. It must be owned that Lloyd George's keen paternal interest in the Disarmament provisions of the Peace Treaties caused him to press the policy of Disarmament as a means of promoting peace, far more persistently than the international situation warranted. He had himself been responsible during his Premiership after the war for a bold gesture of British disarmament which was not copied by her neighbours, and he put more confidence than later events showed to have been justified in the success of the Disarmament Commission in stripping Germany of weapons.

In retrospect it can be clearly seen that there never was a time between the two world wars when a policy of universal disarmament had the slightest chance of being carried out. And the Disarmament Conference, on which such high hopes were centred by peace-lovers in many lands, was palpably doomed before it opened by the fact that as soon as the National Government was set up in Britain the Japanese launched their undeclared war of aggression on China to capture Manchuria, rightly calculating that the Tories would feel no conscientious duty to interfere on account of Britain's pledges to the League of Nations. Since it was obvious that Japan would not join in disarmament when she was carrying

on a war, the talk of world disarmament was futile. The sole positive achievement of the Disarmament Conference, which opened in Geneva on 2nd February, 1932, and was finally abandoned in April 1934, after having broken down in the previous November, was to furnish Hitler with a pretext for breaking away from the League of Nations and openly starting the rearmament of Germany.

The political picture did not attract Lloyd George, and until the summer of 1934 he put most of his energies into the work on the *War Memoirs*, of which Volumes 3 and 4 were published in September and October. Volume 4 contained the story of Passchendaele—L.G.'s bitterest memory during the time that he was war Premier, and the affair which stirred him to the fiercest attack on the military authorities with whom, during the war, he had often disagreed. He had not overridden them at the time. To attempt to do so would almost certainly have brought about his fall and established more firmly than ever their autocracy in the military sphere. That would have meant that Allied unity of Command would never have been realized, and the war would have ended either in defeat or in a stalemate. But Lloyd George could not easily forgive himself for having allowed them to carry on with the bloody folly of Passchendaele, and in his account he dealt remorselessly with them. The Passchendaele story roused intense public interest, and Lloyd George was deluged with letters from officers who had been through that campaign and were eager to certify the accuracy of his narrative and the justice of his strictures on the military authorities guilty of that stupid crime.

The breach between Lloyd George and the official Liberal Party had never fully healed. Though by far the biggest figure in Liberalism, he remained aloof, a solitary giant, appearing occasionally to utter an appeal for effective national action to deal with unemployment, to urge rural reconstruction, or to plead for disarmament and support of the League of Nations. In the middle of June 1934 he engaged in conference with Lord Astor and Seeborn Rowntree on the subject of a new smallholding policy, a question which they had been studying in consultation with the leading agricultural Professors, Orwin of Oxford, Stapledon of Aberystwyth, and Hanley of Newcastle. But their ideas seemed to him too timid, and in any case they were all aware that the National Government was most unlikely to carry out either a bold or a cautious scheme of the kind they were discussing. Its policy, indeed, was one of restricting agricultural output.

For many years no annual gathering of the Welsh Eisteddfod was complete without Lloyd George, and in August 1934 he went as usual to Wales and presided at the Charing of the Bard. Here, and in the days that followed during his stay at Criccieth, he was sought out by several of the chief figures in Welsh Liberalism, who had grown impatient at the

dreary barrenness of the political prospect and the sore plight of the Principality under the National Government. For years now Wales had been a tragically depressed area. In coal-mining and tin-plate, two of the largest industries of South Wales, unemployment had been round about 40%, and nearly as high in shipping and dock and harbour work. The National Government would do nothing. Ramsay MacDonald, when pressed by the Opposition to put in hand works of reconstruction that would create employment, dreadingly protested that it would be a waste of time to give men work for two or three years if they would be unemployed again in the end. So the valleys of South Wales remained desolate, the living tombs of workless men who starved on the meagre dole and the shamefully small scale of assistance for their wives and families. The sum allowed for the feeding, clothing and housing of each child was two shillings a week, and MacDonald protested his inability to raise it to three shillings, though at the same time he could show his zeal for culture by authorizing a Government contribution of £100,000 towards the cost of buying from Russia the *Codex Sinaiticus* for the British Museum.

The men who now approached L.G.—Welsh bankers, coal merchants, shipowners—were suffering alike in their Welsh patriotism, their social consciences and their pockets. They were anxious to persuade him to frame a constructive policy for Wales. After all, he had started his political career as a Welsh Nationalist! If plans could be made to lift Wales out of the misery into which she had sunk they were confident that it would secure universal support in the Principality, irrespective of party.

Lloyd George, who had been working continuously for the past two years on his *War Memoirs*, found himself decidedly attracted by the idea of trying a fresh venture in the field of politics, and he set up what would now be called a working party to see what could be done to frame a policy of Welsh Reconstruction. The preliminary discussions at Criccieth were followed by more systematic meetings at Churt after his return to the south.

Very soon, however, it was borne in on him and his friends that no independent policy could be formed for Wales. Welsh economy was closely interwoven with that of England, and could not be disentangled. It was the gradual realization of this truth which, a generation earlier, had transformed L.G. from a Welsh Nationalist into a British Liberal. The new study of the problem confirmed the earlier lesson. If Reconstruction was to be carried out, it must be to a design extending to the whole of the United Kingdom.

On this altered basis the study was resumed. The working party, which had originally been entirely Welsh, called in further expert members from the English side of Offa's Dyke, and under Lloyd George's leadership a system of proposals was constructed for dealing with the

causes of national depression and putting the country on the road to prosperity. These proposals had, naturally, a good deal of identity in certain respects with those that had already been put out in the Industrial Inquiry Report, in *We Can Conquer Unemployment*, and in *How to Tackle Unemployment*, especially in the suggestions they made for capital development and agricultural revival. But in other important respects they went much beyond those earlier publications. They paid more attention to the industrial problems created by technological developments of labour-saving machinery. They passed under review the possible openings for overseas trade with the colonies and with the Far East and other potential markets. In particular, they led up to the recommendation that the Government should set up a small inner Cabinet on Lloyd George's war-time model, and a National Development Board to survey the country's industrial, agricultural and financial resources, and make plans for developing and using them and for applying the national credit to finance its programmes. To facilitate the financial aspect of reconstruction, the Bank of England should be brought under public control.

When he had his plans well blocked out, Lloyd George discussed various aspects of them with other leading experts, who could advise him how far his ideas were practicable. His proposals for expanding trade with China, for example, had the scrutiny of Lionel Curtis, and his financial recommendations were checked over by Sir Basil Blackett, a Governor of the Bank of England.

Lloyd George's programme was essentially non-party. If he himself was still a Liberal, he was looked on by the priesthood of the Party as an excommunicated schismatic, and anything he put forward would be viewed by them with the utmost suspicion. This did not distress him, for the official Liberals were without power or influence. But he looked round, right and left, to see what prospect there was of getting support for his plans from the Tories and the Socialists.

Among the young Conservatives there was at the time a great deal of dissatisfaction with the way things were going, and a group of them, led by Harold Macmillan, presently formed themselves into a Committee of Liberty and Democratic Leadership, which set to work to frame a plan of reforms to be carried through in the next five years. Their aims and ideas were strikingly similar to those of Lloyd George, and in consequence there was a friendly relationship between their "Next Five Years" movement and the veteran statesman.

Various intermediaries sought to bring Baldwin and Lloyd George together. For a time there seemed some prospect that the two might reach an understanding. Baldwin was in difficulties with a section of his Party over the White Paper on Indian policy. Churchill, who had been carefully left out of the National Government, allied himself on this issue

with the Die-hard wing of the Party, and led a formidable opposition which threatened to split the Tories and endanger the safety of the Government. Baldwin's position was for the moment far from secure, and it seemed to some people that he might be glad to reach an understanding with Lloyd George. Baldwin himself was diffident about making a move for this. He remembered too well the part he had played a dozen years earlier in throwing L.G. out of office. But others moved for him. In particular, Smuts, who was in England for a visit in the autumn of 1934, and was anxious to see his old colleague back in harness, tackled Baldwin about it. "Could you and would you work with L.G.?" he asked him. Baldwin said that he could and would, and on 14th November Smuts wrote to Lloyd George confirming that there were possibilities of an alliance here.

Through the mediation of Dr. Addison, Lloyd George also had a discussion with Lansbury, who was now leading the attenuated Labour Party. His aim here, if agreement on a constructive programme could be reached, was to discuss some understanding whereby the number of three-cornered fights could be reduced, and Liberal and Labour candidates cease to split the progressive vote, letting in the Tory. But he was unable to win any success in this. Whatever possibility there might be after another election of a working arrangement between Liberals and Labour, there was none of a pre-election understanding.

On 4th December, 1934, a Conservative Conference was held at the Queen's Hall to discuss the Indian problem, and Baldwin got an overwhelming majority for his policy. This relieved him of any immediate need to seek alliance with Lloyd George, and the prospect of getting advance support on the Tory side for the programme of National Reconstruction disappeared. Lloyd George decided to go ahead by himself and place his scheme before the nation.

He chose Bangor as the place for his opening shot. On 17th January, 1935—his seventy-second birthday—he held a big meeting at which he announced to the country his proposals for restoring national prosperity on a permanent foundation. He emphasized that he was not launching any party campaign; but as a British statesman with a very thorough experience of handling national problems, and on the basis of a searching study of the country's difficulties, he had reached the conclusion that these would not be solved by wishful waiting, but required a bold initiative, just as in America. President Roosevelt had struck out boldly with his "New Deal" policy. Roosevelt's methods were unsuitable for application in detail here, and some of them might prove faulty. But a similar boldness, energy and fertility of design were needed to pull Britain out of her depression and unemployment, and provide not a palliative, but a cure. He sketched in broad outline the policy which he

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recommended to the nation, and the administrative machinery—the Development Council, the small inner Cabinet, the control of the Bank of England and the raising of a big Prosperity Loan—whereby the schemes for industrial and commercial revival, agricultural reconstruction and the removal of unemployment were to be achieved.

The speech created an immense sensation. To a dreary, relaxed nation, crippled in its initiative by the semi-totalitarianism of a National Government, and devitalized by years of trade depression and heavy unemployment, the proclamation of what was hailed as “Lloyd George’s New Deal” was electrifying. The Press warmly acclaimed it. The Liberals promptly asserted that it was nearly all in the Liberal programme already. Harold Macmillan welcomed it as in substantial agreement with the ideas of the young Conservatives. Various aspects of the policy were warmly praised by such various spokesmen as Page Croft, Steel-Maitland, Lord Eustace Percy and Lord Londonderry. Garvin, in the *Observer*, urged Lloyd George to forget his old grudge against Ramsay MacDonald and become one of the three leading members of the reorganized National Cabinet he had proposed, with a view to carrying out his “New Deal” policy.

An ominously different noise was made by Neville Chamberlain, who professed to find the proposals disappointing, though he said that the Government would examine them with an open mind. They were not above taking ideas from any source whatever, but only if satisfied that those ideas would really achieve their purpose. This, obviously, was an attitude which would always excuse them for doing nothing on the plea that they were unconvinced that anything was worth doing. Indeed, shortly before, on 21st December, 1934, Chamberlain had retorted in the House when asked by L.G. about the Government’s unemployment policy, “Our unemployment policy is to continue as we have been doing!” The number then unemployed exceeded 2,000,000, as it had done for the past four-and-a-half years.

Despite the great popular support which was given to Lloyd George’s “New Deal” proposals, the prospect of their adoption by the Government was never very promising. Baldwin might have been willing to co-operate with L.G., but MacDonald was stubbornly antagonistic to the idea. He detested the thought of being driven forward by so restless and energetic a person. He preferred to drape his inactivity with large, vague statements such as the one he had made in the previous October, when in a speech to the National Labour Party he said:

“The modification of the past as quickly as possible to meet the circumstances of the future is the one policy which is going to bring us as a Government and as a nation up, up, and up and on, on, and on,

without experiencing the disastrous effects of sudden breaks in continuity."

Neville Chamberlain was even more grimly determined not to welcome Lloyd George as a colleague. In his biography by Keith Feiling it is recorded that after his abortive tenure of office as Minister of National Service in 1917, he reached the determined conclusion never to serve with Lloyd George again. The Liberal Nationals in the Government, Simon and Runciman, were also bitterly anti-Lloyd George—not least because bringing him into the Government might involve turning one of them out!

Baldwin, whose adroitness in political tactics often compensated for his defects as a statesman, decided to play a waiting game. He sent word through Harold Macmillan that he was not averse on principle to co-operating with L.G., but did not want to make any move at the moment. He hoped that L.G. would not commit himself to any other party for two or three months.

As an interesting sidelight on the political cross-currents of the time, it may be recorded that Lord Rothermere, who had previously assured L.G. of his support for the "New Deal", wrote to him on 25th January urging him to throw in his lot with the Right Wing, which was destined to be the dominant political force.

"Come out very strong on India and air armaments and I believe at the end of a couple of years you will be the leader of the Conservative Party and once more Prime Minister. There is nothing in your New Deal that cannot be adopted by the Conservative Party."

Rothermere and Beaverbrook both disliked Baldwin, and would have been glad to bring about his fall. But Lloyd George had no wish to be leader of the Conservative Party, or to take on the burden of Premiership. Already his resilience was beginning to flag, and he grew more easily exhausted, though he was still capable of an immense short-term effort, or of a good deal of intermittent heavy work. He would have been willing to join an Administration with the object of putting his New Deal into effect, but office as such held no attraction for him. Except for the purpose of rendering some special service to the country, he would prefer to cultivate his Churt farm.

More than a month went by with no sound from the Government, and it seemed that Neville Chamberlain was succeeding in persuading them to hold out against Lloyd George. But at the beginning of March a letter arrived from MacDonald, inviting him to submit his plans to the

Cabinet for consideration. The young Tories had been pressing the Government very hard, and had finally driven them to action. Lloyd George at once set to work to give a final polish and revision to his memorandum setting out the New Deal proposals, and have it multi-graphed, and on 14th March it was placed in the hands of the Cabinet.

For a time it was reckoned extremely probable in high political circles that this would lead to an invitation to Lloyd George to join the Administration. Labour members reproached him for not giving them preference, and were distressed to learn that he had in fact approached Lansbury but had been held off. The general impression still persisted when on 18th April Lloyd George appeared before a Cabinet Committee which had been set up to examine his plans, and held a preliminary discussion with them. Lord St. Davids wrote to him next day, urging him not to be in a hurry to join the Government, as MacDonald's stock had fallen so low that if he remained Prime Minister the National Government would lose the next election. It would be better to wait until after the election.

The meetings with the Cabinet Committee went on for over a fortnight, but soon Lloyd George realized that the Government were deliberately playing out time. The Silver Jubilee of King George V was due on 6th May, and Baldwin had planned a great series of public events in celebration of the occasion. They made an extensive break in the discussion of the New Deal, and completely took men's minds off it. When the celebrations were over, the New Deal had become cold porridge. As soon as Lloyd George met the Cabinet after the Jubilee he realized that they had decided to reject his proposals.

Lloyd George had, of course, to put in an appearance at the Jubilee functions, including the State Banquet at the Palace. He was never fond of big social occasions, and rarely went to Court—a circumstance on which His Majesty sometimes commented adversely, for he enjoyed the conversation of his most brilliant subject. Unlike MacDonald, L.G. set no value on the company of those in high society on the score of their titles, and persistently turned down their invitations. He had, apparently, a cavity where the bump of snobbery ought to be, and would as soon talk with a hedge-trimmer as with a Duke, if the hedge-trimmer had something to say which interested him. However, the Prince of Wales wanted L.G. to go with him on 11th May to Cardiff, where he had to speak to a Welsh audience in connection with the Jubilee, and at the banquet King George caught L.G. by the arm and led him off into another room and personally asked him to go, promising that the Prince would take him down in his special train. There was no getting out of it after that. But while everyone from His Majesty down was extremely friendly to L.G., his plans for national recovery, which he prized far more

highly than any attentions from the great, were shipwrecked on Neville Chamberlain's inveterate personal animosity.

As soon as he realized that the prospects of persuading the Government to take on his schemes were darkening, Lloyd George began to look round for other possible allies. Among his sympathizers he could count the "Next Five Years" group of young Conservatives, a number of leading national figures, and the Churches, which had been pressing the Government to take action to deal with unemployment and with the problems of peace and Disarmament. The depth of public interest in these latter issues had been revealed by the "Peace Ballot", a house-to-house referendum conducted during the previous winter and spring to test the public support of the League of Nations and Disarmament. The response to it, despite much cold water thrown by the Government, had been overwhelmingly favourable, and Lloyd George, who was an unrepentant advocate of the League and Disarmament, decided to link together his New Deal policy and the policy of peace through the League, as a combined international and domestic programme that could be pressed on the country.

He called his sympathizers into council, and it was resolved to set up a movement of non-party character, to be called "The Council of Action for Peace and Reconstruction", with the object of pressing on all political parties and parliamentary candidates this dual programme. It was realized that another General Election would soon be due, and the object of the new Council was to secure that as many as possible of the members elected to the next Parliament should be pledged to support the policy advocated by the Council.

The inaugural meetings of this organization were held on 1st and 2nd July, 1935, at the Central Hall, Westminster. Certain bishops who had wanted to associate themselves with the movement had been warned off it by the Archbishop, but it had strong support from the Free Churches, headed by the venerable figure of Dr. Scott Lidgett. Among the speakers for the Council's policy were the Marquess of Lothian, Viscount Cecil of Chelwood, George Lansbury, Sir Basil Blackett, Harold Macmillan, and other political figures, and a number of prominent Free Church leaders. A resolution was carried approving the Manifesto, "A Call to Action", which had been issued over some 33 signatures of distinguished people, and another setting up the Council of Action to secure the return to the next Parliament of members pledged, regardless of party, to secure action on the proposed lines for peace and reconstruction.

Baldwin's consent had been obtained to the publication of the Memorandum which Lloyd George had submitted to the Cabinet, setting forth his plans for reconstruction, and advance copies of it were rushed into print for the Conference. Under the title *Organizing Prosperity*, it

was formally issued on 10th July as a booklet of 107 pages, with the addition of a foreword by L.G. explaining its history, and was very widely sold.

Ramsay MacDonald had retired from the Premiership on 7th June, and had handed over to Baldwin. The resignation was long overdue, for while MacDonald still seemed physically healthy, his mind had clouded and his public utterances were at times quite unintelligible. Baldwin had all his wits about him, but he was no more inclined for action than his predecessor, and announced his policy as "peace in our time, O Lord!"—which, admirable as a goal, was ineffectual as a programme for dealing with the domestic and international ills of the time. But he sought peace within his Cabinet by yielding to Chamberlain's insistence and breaking off negotiations with Lloyd George.

Shortly after the publication of *Organizing Prosperity*, the Government issued its official reply in a pamphlet called "A Better Way to Better Times". This was a niggling and frivolous document, bearing all the marks of having been composed by some bright Civil Service official who had been set the task of making a debating retort to Lloyd George. Its theme was that the accumulated experience of the Government departments was bound to provide more wisdom as to how to deal with the nation's difficulties than could be furnished by an outside Committee. It seemed unaware that this departmental experience had failed to provide any way of rescuing the country from five years of black depression and unemployment; that the Report of the Commissioner for the Special Areas, Malcolm Stewart, which was issued at almost the same time, showed up the utter failure of the Government to deal with the tragic conditions prevailing in the districts worst hit by the depression; or that the Committee which had co-operated with Lloyd George in the preparation of his schemes contained some of the foremost industrial, financial and economic experts in the land—men to whose advice Government departments would naturally turn if they were seeking to frame a wise policy to deal with the situation.

This cheap and flimsy Government reply, clearly inspired by Neville Chamberlain, officially closed the matter. It was evident that the National Government had decided not to accept anything from Lloyd George. Therewith the last prospect of his taking office again in a British government was closed. He could still, as a wise elder statesman, offer counsel on urgent issues. His Council of Action might play a part in moving political opinion. But henceforth the responsibility for national administration would rest in other hands.



*Part VII*  
CLOSING YEARS  
1935–1945



## CHAPTER XXV

### ELDER STATESMAN

LOYD GEORGE'S Council of Action had hardly begun its propaganda on behalf of the policy of maintaining peace through the League of Nations before that policy was faced with the challenge of the Italo-Abyssinian dispute.

Mussolini, the Italian dictator, had conceived the idea of restoring the glories of Imperial Rome. Once it had ruled all southern and western Europe and the whole Mediterranean basin, and this pinchbeck Caesar dreamed of recovering its ancient Empire. As a first step in his territorial expansion he decided on the conquest of Abyssinia, which less than half a century earlier, from 1890 to 1895, had been an Italian Protectorate. A quarrel was easy to pick, on the score of a frontier dispute about wells at Wal-wal on the indeterminate boundary between Abyssinia and Italian Somaliland. He made known his determination to obtain satisfaction for what he alleged to be an insult to Italy, and began to move arms and troops to the Italian territories bordering on Ethiopia.

The French Government was well aware of his intention, to which it was willing to consent, having struck a bargain by which Italy withdrew her antagonism to French retention of Tunis and closed a military entente with her Western neighbour. The British Government was also aware, but when MacDonald went with Simon to meet the Italian and French Premiers at Stresa in April 1935 he carefully made no mention of Abyssinia, and his silence was naturally taken by Mussolini to intimate consent to the projected conquest. The Emperor of Abyssinia repeatedly protested to the League of Nations against the growing threat of Italian aggression, and at length goaded it into setting up a Conciliation Commission, which abandoned its efforts on 9th July in face of the Italian attitude.

Baldwin, who had now replaced MacDonald as Prime Minister, had not the slightest wish to meddle with the affair, and hoped that the Abyssinians would give in quietly. When they appealed for arms with which to defend themselves, they were told to trust to the League. The League tried in August to provide a settlement, but Mussolini rejected it and declared, "Italy will pursue her aims—with Geneva, without Geneva, or against Geneva." It was evident to the world that he intended to make war as soon as the rains were over.

On 2nd October, 1935, he struck. Italian troops poured into Abyssinia and aircraft started to bomb her towns and villages. The League promptly

met and showed itself unanimous in denouncing this aggression, and Sir Samuel Hoare, who represented Britain, and was aware of the very strong feeling which had been roused at home by the Italian assault, put himself in line with it by making a valiant speech in support of the League's attitude.

Meanwhile Baldwin, who had been on the look-out for some opportunity to hold an election on an issue which would appeal to the people, decided that the Italo-Abyssinian trouble gave him an opportunity, as it had distracted attention from the Government's inaction in regard to unemployment. Everyone was thinking about the new war and the task which it set the League of Nations. Baldwin's election manifesto declared:

"The League of Nations will remain, as heretofore, the keystone of British foreign policy. . . . We shall continue to do all in our power to uphold the Covenant and to maintain and increase the efficiency of the League. In the present unhappy dispute between Italy and Abyssinia there will be no wavering in the policy we have hitherto pursued. . . . We shall endeavour to further any discussions which may offer the hope of a just and fair settlement, provided that it be within the framework of the League and acceptable to the three parties to the dispute—Italy, Abyssinia, and the League itself."

These were fair words, and appeared to offer the fullest satisfaction to the demands which the Council of Action was pressing on the country on the international side. On the domestic side he promised more home-grown food, special measures to help the distressed areas and other attractive reforms. His shop-window, in fact, was most engagingly dressed, and most people failed to realize that the goods in it were dummies.

Lloyd George and his Council of Action, being non-party, did not organize opposition, but pressed the statement of their policy with a view to influencing the electorate to vote for candidates who would pledge their support for it. Lloyd George in a broadcast uttered some scathing criticisms of the Government's past failures, but was mainly concerned to urge his own constructive proposals, not to support either of the opposition parties. During the election he spoke only in his own constituency and in those of his son Gwilym and his daughter Megan. He had magnificent meetings, and his tiny family party were all safely returned—himself, Gwilym, Megan and Gwilym's brother-in-law, Goronwy Owen. But the Liberal Party presented a sorry spectacle. More than half its former members had hived off into the Simonite group, and of the remainder, only twenty-one (including the L.G. four) managed to struggle back to Parliament, leaving their leaders, Sir Herbert Samuel,

Sir Walter Rea, Isaac Foot and Harcourt Johnstone, behind in the wilderness.

The Simonites had by now become a sept of the Tory clan, dependent for their return on Tory votes, and supporting Tories in and out of Parliament. It is one of the ironies of politics that their leaders, Simon, Runciman, Godfrey Collins, had all been leading rabbis in the Liberal Sanhedrin which overwhelmed Lloyd George with anathemas for his deadly sin of continuing to consort with Tories in his Coalition Government between 1918 and 1922. They had preached that L.G. was too defiled by that contact to be worthy to associate again with Liberals unless he purged himself by doing penance in a white sheet. Now he was not only back again in the Liberal community, but on its Radical Left Wing. They had travelled far deeper into the Tory wilderness than he had ever ventured, and they would never come back.

The Tories, with 387 of the 615 seats, still held an unshakable majority in the new Parliament. With their satellites, the Simonites and "National" Labour members, they formed about 70% of the House of Commons. It was clear that Lloyd George's Council of Action could exert but little influence in face of this solid Tory majority. It was reduced to the role of a guerilla force, which could try to sting the Government into action by sniping, but did not command a reliable block of the membership large enough to sway the voting. The National Government whips had also developed a far stricter control over the members than had previously been known in Parliament. In the old days of more nearly balanced parties, members were wont to exercise considerable freedom of action, speaking and voting against their own party if they disagreed with it on any issue. But under the semi-totalitarian regime of the National Government such independent action would have been political suicide, and Tory members who supported the programme of the Council of Action had to be cautious in their criticisms of their leaders, and dare not carry their criticism into the lobby.

Lloyd George decided, none the less, to keep his Council in being, and he established it in a suite of offices in Horseferry House, behind Thames House on Millbank, where his own political headquarters had been housed since his withdrawal from leadership of the Liberal Party at the end of 1931. Angus Watson accepted the post of Chairman of the Council, and Victor Finney became its Organizing Secretary. It maintained a steady stream of propaganda on behalf of the policy of Peace and Reconstruction. It issued Speakers' Notes and other literature, and a weekly News Bulletin of political information and comment, and furnished briefs to those 67 M.P.s who had pledged the Council their support, when they wanted information for speeches in Parliament or the country. It intervened strongly at by-elections, laying its programme

before the candidates and working powerfully for whichever of them agreed to support that programme if returned. There can be no doubt that in a number of the by-elections which took place in the four years between 1935 and 1939, the Council's activities turned the scale in favour of its protégé.

After the 1935 election, however, Lloyd George ceased to concentrate on politics, and turned back to complete his *War Memoirs*, of which the last two volumes had still to be written.

If Lloyd George's interest in politics waxed and waned from this time forward, his devotion to his farm steadily increased. Son of a long line of peasant farmers, he had in his blood a strong love for the soil and a deep satisfaction in making it bring forth its fruits. On one occasion when, with the Industrial Inquiry Committee gathered round him in his Churt library, he had been discussing the possibilities of land settlement, Masterman, who was essentially urban in his tastes, ventured to bait him, half in jest, by asserting that rural depopulation was highly desirable. Why should people drag out a half-animal existence of dull toil in the mud, in lonely villages and farms, remote from the amenities of civilization, when they could live in towns and enjoy good light, amusements, firm streets, limited hours of work and abundant society? Let the countryside rot! We could buy our food from lesser breeds abroad and use our own people for the higher arts and manufactures.

He stirred his host profoundly. Lloyd George rose from his chair and paced back and forth, pouring out a flood of eloquence about the deep satisfactions of the countryman's life, creating fertility and abundance out in the open air and sunlight, near to Mother Earth and to Nature, watching and sharing their miracles. He withered with his scorn the dismal drudgery of factory and workshop, the sad vista of mean streets and the murderous congestion of the slums in which the sons of a once free peasantry were herded. Delivered to an audience of less than a dozen men sitting round the library, L.G.'s speech was one of his most magnificent oratorical efforts. At its close he flung out of the room to cool down. Masterman, emerging dazed from the coruscation he had provoked, looked round and said: "I've often wondered what L.G. was at bottom. I know now. He's an inspired Peasant!"

Perhaps he was; but he was not an experienced farmer, and his first ventures were unsuccessful. He gradually accumulated at Churt an estate of about six hundred acres, much of it either very poor arable land or uncultivated and traditionally uncultivable sandy heath, covered with heather, bracken and scrub, running uphill towards Hindhead. The soil was known as "Cobbett's Anathema", on account of the disgust with which it had been regarded by the author of the *Rural Rides*. Below Bron-y-de there were a few fields which had given employment to a

man and a boy. In his early days at Churt, Lloyd George had a farm foreman experienced in stock-raising, who induced him to try to use his land for this purpose, but it was ill-suited for it, and the experiment was a failure. His efforts at arable cultivation with another foreman were no more profitable, though in later years his persistence in cultivating, manuring and irrigating his poor land raised it to a high level of fertility. On one field he set up a poultry farm, but although it was fitted up with incubators and all sorts of up-to-date equipment, the poultry man somehow only managed to show losses on its running, and L.G. himself could not develop any real fondness for the hens. "They look at me with such a cold, cynical stare!" he complained. "A nasty, suspicious look!"

His orchards thrived, however, and he took counsel with the best expert advisers on fruit-growing, who came and studied his land, and concluded that much of it might prove well suited to growing apples. His pigs, too, did well, and he started the practice of folding his pigs, unringed, on plot after plot of the waste scrubland. They dug it for him with their snouts, eating out the roots of bush and bracken. After completing the clearance they had begun he could plough it, sow it down with some green crop such as mustard, to be ploughed in for humus, and then plant it up with fruit trees. By degrees he developed a quite extensive fruit farm, the produce of which was magnificent in its quality.

In July 1935 he won the first, second and third prizes and the Silver Cup at the Soft Fruit Show for his blackcurrants, and year after year he won prizes for soft and orchard fruits and for heather honey. In July 1936 he opened a rustic shop on the corner of his estate where the Hindhead and Thursley roads crossed, and developed a highly remunerative retail sale of his farm produce to supplement his wholesale marketing at Covent Garden and among the retailers in the nearer Surrey towns. While it must be admitted that his earlier experiments in agriculture were costly, his farm land ultimately became a thoroughly sound business undertaking which returned a good profit. He justified to critics his earlier losses by pointing out that he had been using his money to test out the possibilities of previously barren land, and had bought experience which could be of the greatest value to other agriculturists.

His lack of experience, indeed, was in some ways a liberating factor, leaving him free to venture into experiments which a farmer trained into a traditional way of cultivating might not have risked. His ploughing pigs were an example of this. He tried irrigation of his dry, sandy soil, and in search of water he called in a dowsers, who chose a spot which, when bored for an artesian well, yielded an abundant supply. Knowing that he knew little, he made full use of expert advice for his planting, pruning, spraying and cropping. The prizes he won at shows and the

credit balances in his farm accounts demonstrated the wisdom of this course.

On his farm at Churt, Lloyd George was a happy man, and when reporters came down to inspect his achievements he would personally conduct them round and explain to them what he was doing and planning to do. He would walk them round the fields and orchards, and with his long-acquired ability as a walker he would race ahead, his white locks flying in the breeze, while they, tough young men though they were, panted wearily behind, and got back to Bron-y-de breathless and exhausted. Rumours that he had grown feeble, and was a spent force, could not survive their experience.

But the affairs of the political world still tugged at him, and from time to time drew him up to London. It was a dismal scene at Westminster, of shameful Government inaction or of even more shameful action. The National Government had won the election on pledges to support the League of Nations and to achieve a just settlement of the Italo-Abyssinian conflict, on terms acceptable to both sides. But before the new Parliament had been in session for a week the infamous Hoare-Laval Pact was concluded in Paris by the Foreign Secretary and endorsed by Baldwin and his Cabinet—a pact whereby large parts of Ethiopia were to be transferred to Italy, and most of the remainder placed under full Italian control for colonization and exploitation.

The newly elected Tories had not yet had time to forget their election speeches and manifestos, and their stomachs, less tough than Baldwin's, turned at this shameless treachery. There was a storm of reproaches in the House, and Baldwin promptly sacked Hoare and confessed to an error of judgment. "I was not expecting," he pleaded, "that deeper feeling which was manifested by many of my hon. friends in many parts of the country on what I may call the ground of conscience and of honour!" As the Parliament matured, it too grew far less sensitive to those higher impulses, and allowed the Government to follow a pusillanimous and hypocritical course in regard to the Abyssinian war; to make a show of imposing sanctions on Italy of a kind which annoyed without hampering her, but to balk at the proposal to cut off the supplies of oil which would really have grounded the aircraft with which she was dropping bombs of poison gas on the villages of Ethiopia.

Lloyd George was in Morocco, busy on his *War Memoirs*, at the time of the Hoare-Laval Pact, and could not express in Parliament his boiling indignation at this treachery. He himself would have used the British Navy to bar the Suez Canal, thus cutting off the Italians from access to Abyssinia—a perfectly practicable method of stopping the war, for the Italians were never recklessly valiant at sea, and there were vessels in the British Navy which could blow the whole Italian Fleet out of the

water before it could get near enough to bring its own guns to bear on them. Since under the Covenant of the League of Nations a country which attacked a Member State was to be held guilty of attacking them all, the most resolute action would have been warranted to stop Italy's aggression on Abyssinia, and L.G., if in power, would certainly have called on the League to authorize such action in defence of its attacked member. But the truth was that France, anxious to retain Italian support for defence against Germany, threw her whole weight into the scale to discourage any serious League measures against Mussolini, and the British National Government weakly and lethargically concurred with her. The French statesmen, with their unscrupulous "Realpolitik", did not foresee that the course they sponsored ruined the League of Nations, leaving them without defences against their potential foes, and that four-and-a-half years later Mussolini, flushed with the successes to which they had helped him, would be invading Southern France in alliance with Germany, adding the final shame of his ass's kick to them in their hour of defeat.

On his return to Britain, Lloyd George made clear his disgust at the course which the Government had elected to follow. Although the Hoare-Laval Pact had been dropped, it was clear that Baldwin had no intention of doing anything positive to fulfil his election pledges of support for the League's authority against Italian aggression. When it was announced on 18th June that the Government had decided on abandoning the ineffectual commercial sanctions which the League had imposed against Italy, Lloyd George's wrath boiled over. In a bitter and fiery speech he trounced and flayed the Administration. No other of the members of the League had withdrawn its support of sanctions. The Foreign Secretary was going to Geneva to smash the League.

"I have been in this House very nearly half a century, and . . . I have never before heard a British Minister, speaking on behalf of the Government . . . say that Britain was beaten—Britain and her Empire beaten—and that we must abandon the enterprise we had taken in hand."

He pointed out that there was less danger of war now than when sanctions were originally imposed. The Navy was fully equipped; the German menace no greater; France more disposed to co-operate, now that Laval had disappeared. But the Government had funkcd, though it was not yet too late to support Abyssinia and compel Italy to come to terms. The great British statesmen of the past—Disraeli, Gladstone, Balfour, Joseph Chamberlain—had been men of dauntless courage, yet their successors gave this exhibition of poltroonery. Even Neville Chamberlain had said at the last Election:

“The choice before us is whether we shall make a last effort at Geneva for peace and security or whether by a cowardly surrender we shall break all the promises we have made and hold ourselves up to the shame of our children and their children’s children.”

“Tonight,” said Lloyd George, “we have had the cowardly surrender, and *there* are the cowards!”

Baldwin, quite overwhelmed by this unexpected avalanche, crumpled up in his seat, and at first would make no response to the insistent calls to him from all parts of the House to reply. He looked over piteously to L.G., who with an inexorable jerk of the head dragged him to his feet, to stumble through a speech which clearly had been prepared with no idea of the need to put up a defence against L.G.’s mordant exposure. An immense post poured in to Churt after this debate, a deluge of congratulatory letters, many of them from lifelong Conservatives. Not one per cent of the letters were abusive, and those were all anonymous.

But whatever ignominy they might incur, the Government were evidently resolved to follow a policy of resolute quiescence. They would render nothing more than lip-service to the League; they would attempt nothing to reduce the tragedy of unemployment. Nothing would induce them to take any measures which might look like an acceptance of Lloyd George’s “New Deal” policy, or of the sincere support of the League which was being advocated by his Council of Action, and by another independent critic, Winston Churchill.

Hitler had been quick to read the meaning of the League’s collapse over Abyssinia. In March 1936 he declared that the newly concluded Franco-Soviet Pact was a breach of the Locarno Agreement, and tearing up that document he marched his troops into the demilitarized Rhineland. The French and British Governments dithered in face of this challenge. With British encouragement and backing the French would have sent their forces to drive out the German troops, and it transpired later that in face of firm action by them, the Germans would have backed down and Hitler would have fallen from power. But it was idle to expect resolution from the National Government, and the German coup met only diplomatic protests, to which Hitler gave soothing replies.

Had Lloyd George been in power, he would have certainly insisted on making the Germans withdraw. But it must be admitted that he also had some sympathy with the German desire to be masters in their own territory, and felt that they had some justification for feeling aggrieved with the Powers which had been victorious in the First World War for failing to carry out their Treaty pledges to effect general disarmament and to maintain peace and guarantee safety through the League. Despite the Covenant, Britain had insisted on the League’s inactivity in face of

Japan's invasion of Manchuria, and had damped down to futility the League's resistance to Italy's conquest of Abyssinia. L.G. felt, therefore, that the Allies were the real offenders, driving Germany to take precautions for her own defence. At the time, in common with most other statesmen in Europe and America, he underestimated the danger of Hitler being either able or willing to take aggressive action against the Powers by which he was encircled. In the Debate on the Government's White Paper on Rearmament on 9th March, 1936, he declared that Germany would not be so mad as to challenge the formidable armies of France and Russia. "In the very nature of things it would be an impossible enterprise of Germany, with all these forces against her."

But if Lloyd George did not anticipate trouble from Germany, he could not very well fail to admire the energy with which Hitler was pulling that country out of the depths of prostration and chaos into which she had sunk during the world depression. Hitler seemed to be doing in Germany just what L.G. had vainly urged the British Government to do in Britain, and achieving the success which he had asserted, and the scribes of the Treasury had denied, to be possible through such a policy. Hitler was making arterial roads, building houses, reclaiming waste land, setting up smallholdings, using State credit to encourage enterprise: carrying out, in fact, very much the "New Deal" policy which the National Government had contemptuously rejected. And Hitler had two other qualities which attracted L.G. He was an orator who knew just how to appeal to his people; and he was intensely patriotic in that appeal. For Hitler's National Socialism and his totalitarian system Lloyd George had no sympathy whatever, just as he had none for the Communist totalitarianism of Stalin. Of the two, Communism seemed at that time to offer the more serious menace to Western democracy. Nazism did not look much like an exportable form of government.

Hitler, it was well known, had a lively admiration for Lloyd George, and in the spring of 1936 his ambassador, Ribbentrop, repeatedly urged L.G. to pay a visit to Germany. The idea of making such a visit had for some time been in Lloyd George's mind, and he decided to accept the invitation. Professor Conwell Evans, of Königsberg University, a Welshman who had become an ardent devotee of Hitler, was called in to act as intermediary and to make all arrangements for the trip, and he came to Churt in July to discuss plans. By August the text of the two final volumes of the *War Memoirs* had been finally revised, and on 2nd September Lloyd George set off for Germany, to visit Hitler and to see at first hand what was being done there to reconstruct the country and provide work for the unemployed.

The trip started with a visit to Berchtesgaden, Hitler's country residence, where Lloyd George had a couple of interviews with the

Fuehrer. Their talks were friendly, for both were resolutely diplomatic. Hitler was very anxious to win the good opinion of L.G., who for his part, weary of the flabby inaction of those in power in Britain, was ready to applaud the constructive achievements of the German statesman, who was actually doing the job of restoring a nation that had sunk far lower in economic and spiritual collapse than any other in modern times. It is easy for anyone today, looking back across the terrible years of the Second World War, to regret the warmth of the appreciation which L.G. voiced; but although rumours were already circulating about Nazi schemes for expansion in Eastern Europe, and Hitler had advocated such aims in his *Mein Kampf*, the English translation of that book omitted those passages. He had as yet made no menacing gesture against his neighbours, and constantly asserted that his intentions were pacific and his measures of rearmament purely defensive against the danger of Bolshevik attack.

He repeated those assurances to Lloyd George; and if he said anything more, his interpreters avoided translating it. Lloyd George did not understand German. Possibly Lloyd George's remonstrances to him about his persecution of the Jews were also modified in transmission. Hitler's incessant harping on the Bolshevik danger had a familiar sound for L.G., who often heard similar warnings from his friend Lord Lothian, who, much as he disliked the Nazi system, was disposed in the pre-Munich era to welcome the growing strength of Germany as a bulwark against the Communist penetration of Europe.

The name of Hitler has very rightly become today a byword and a hissing. But the horror he ultimately loosed on the world and the diabolic cruelties carried out under his rule and with his approval cannot obliterate, though they overshadow, the fact that he was in truth, as L.G. recognized, an amazingly capable and magnetic leader, and that his early work on behalf of Germany, marred though it was by ruthlessness, tyranny and injustice, was in many respects inspiring, constructive and beneficent. Lloyd George, himself a magnetic and inspiring leader with a passion for reconstruction, sensed and appreciated those qualities in the Fuehrer when they met, and he made no bones about admitting it. He failed, however, to realize at the time the extraordinary craftiness of Hitler's character, the unscrupulous depths below his geniality and protestations of peaceful friendliness. He came away really thinking that good relations with Nazi Germany might be possible. In extenuation, it should be added that subsequently he was far quicker to open his eyes to the reality of the German menace than were the statesmen in charge of British affairs. He would never have practised appeasement or gone to Munich.

After the Berchtesgaden visit L.G. spent a few days touring round in Germany, looking at the industrial and agricultural developments

which were being pushed forward by the Nazi Government, and returned to England on 16th September, rather the worse in health for the racketing and strange foods of the tour.

During the next few weeks he interested himself in the work of the Council of Action, and on 23rd October he addressed a big demonstration at Manchester, organized by that body. He claimed that the democracies were amply strong enough to deal with any menace from the German Nazis and Italian Fascists if they acted firmly and in combination. The key to peace was a firm and fearless policy, carried out with rapidity and resolution. "Cowardice in an emergency is the high road to catastrophe." Those words were spoken two years before Munich!

On 9th November he started off for Jamaica, where he proposed to pass a part of the winter. He had by now definitely left behind any idea of engaging in administrative statesmanship again. In July he had expressed to the writer the view that executive Ministers should not be much over sixty—he was seventy-three. In later years, while the brain remained clear, they had not the physique for the ardours of Cabinet work in an administrative job. They should be "elder statesmen"—advisers, with balanced judgment to counsel the administration, of which younger men should be in charge. He thought people talked foolishly when they suggested he might yet fill an executive post. He could speak and advise; but others should take charge of the execution.

He purposed to continue his literary work, but was uncertain which of various projects he should next take in hand. These included his *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, a pamphlet on the *Economic Situation*, a character-study of Gladstone, and a book on *Welsh Preachers*. This last was a theme he had long thought of tackling, for L.G. was an inveterate sermon taster and as a result a connoisseur of sermons. He had from earliest boyhood made a point of hearing all the most famous pulpit orators of Wales, and had accumulated an immense store of anecdotes about them. Lloyd George's interest in religion was quite genuine, and he often confessed to being a religious man, though very vague about his precise doctrinal beliefs. He had been reared in a narrow creed, from which he had long since parted. He would sometimes say that his own sect of Baptists in Wales was in violent doctrinal conflict with another as to whether the believer was baptized in or into the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. "I know our view is right, and the other is wrong. I would go to the stake for my conviction. But I can never remember which it is!" But if he could jest about credal quarrels, and sometimes, in conversation, express startlingly heretical views in order to provoke discussion, he had a deep, underlying faith in the Divine which, if it did not take form in precise dogmas, frequently showed itself in his thought and speech.

Soon after his arrival in Jamaica he decided to begin with his Peace Memoirs. Before he started work on them, however, a situation arose in England which nearly brought him back again. This was the unhappy affair which culminated in the abdication of King Edward VIII.

Lloyd George had a warm personal regard for the young monarch. When Edward was Prince of Wales L.G. had taken him under his wing, superintending the ceremonies of his installation at Caernarvon Castle, of which at the time L.G. was Constable, and carefully teaching him his Welsh sentences to speak on that occasion. Later, as Prime Minister, Lloyd George had tried to prepare the Heir to the Throne for his future responsibilities, and the Duke of Windsor has testified in his autobiography how hard L.G. drove him, sending him travelling round the Empire and to the United States, the Argentine and Japan, so that he should know the peoples over whom he was to rule, and the countries with which Britain had close connections. Edward was his special protégé, and when he ascended the throne he remained still to L.G. the Prince of Wales. The Celtic statesman felt for him that ineradicable Celtic loyalty which, in Scotland, made the Highlanders follow the banner of the Stuarts in the Jacobite rebellions, regardless of their qualities or defects.

There had been underground rumours of the King's friendship for Mrs. Simpson, but no indication of an imminent constitutional crisis when Lloyd George left for Jamaica. But he had not been long on the island when the affair, which had for some time been extensively publicized in the American Press, but had been boycotted in Britain by agreement between the newspaper proprietors, suddenly exploded upon the astonished public. Edward had intimated his intention of marrying Mrs. Simpson, but the Cabinet, the Church, a majority of the public and the governments of the Dominions were all agreed that she was not acceptable as a Queen Consort. Morganatic marriages, though there was historic precedent for them, were not definitely recognized in British law. Baldwin insisted that Edward must abdicate. Churchill did his best to get a postponement of the decision, in the hope that some solution other than abdication might be found, but Baldwin pressed the issue inexorably. He may have been not altogether sorry to find a good reason for dispensing with Edward, who had deeply annoyed the Government by visiting one of the depressed areas and telling the unemployed that something would be done for them. The Government had no intention of doing anything.

Away in Jamaica, Lloyd George was profoundly distressed as the news of the swiftly unfolding tragedy came through to him. He agreed that Mrs. Simpson could not become Queen, but he did not want to lose the King for whom he felt so affectionate a loyalty, and would have been willing to allow a morganatic marriage, by which she would be the

King's wife but not his Queen. He was out of touch with the currents of opinion in Britain, which were mainly hostile to any such solution. From his temporary exile he sent messages asserting the King's right to choose his wife, and made preparations to dash back to England to join Churchill in trying to avert any irrevocable step. But Baldwin struck swiftly. He did not allow any debate in the House. Taking the matter into his own hands he compelled the King, on 10th December, to sign an Act of Abdication, naming his brother, George, Duke of York, as his successor.

Lloyd George could not have returned in time to attempt any intervention, and his intervention could in any case have availed little. King George VI has admirably filled the throne vacated by his brother Edward, and with his wife, Queen Elizabeth and his two daughters, has maintained the best traditions of the nation and of constitutional monarchy. His strong sense of public duty and his high standard of family life have been an inspiration to the people, who may well feel that Baldwin's high-handed action was justified by its outcome. Yet one can understand the grief and pain which Lloyd George felt at the fall of the Prince whom he had done so much to train for his royal destiny. In view of the line he had taken, Lloyd George was rather dubious as to what his reception at Court would be when he attended the Coronation celebrations. But he was received most cordially by Their Majesties and was instantly and completely captivated by the charm of the Queen.

During the remainder of his stay in Jamaica, and after his return to England, Lloyd George was at work on his *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*—a task which took the bulk of his time until its publication in two large volumes in the autumn of 1938 with the title: *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*. The political situation was disheartening and unattractive. With his large and subservient majority in the Commons, Baldwin kept to his policy of inaction, and when he resigned on 28th May, 1937, after King George's coronation, and moved up to the House of Lords, Neville Chamberlain, who succeeded him, developed the policy of "appeasement" in face of the growing aggressiveness of the two European Dictators, Hitler and Mussolini. With little concealment both were piling up arms and training armies and obviously getting ready for campaigns of aggression, and were using the trouble in Spain as an experimental ground on which to try out their weapons and their warriors.

This trouble had started in 1936, when a Left-wing "Popular Front" Government had been elected in Spain. Though the Government itself was largely Liberal, it failed to prevent Communist elements from carrying out a number of outrages against churches and landowners, and the Italian Duce decided to assist a Fascist rebellion. He sent General

Franco, a pro-Fascist Spaniard, to raise the flag of revolt, and helped him with men and munitions of war. A civil war started and dragged bitterly on, marked by grim atrocities on both sides. Franco had with him the Church, the aristocracy and the bulk of the Army, while the Navy and the mass of the people sided with the Government. Germany also sent help to Franco, using Spain to test the new German air force. But for this intervention, the rising would soon have been suppressed. Russia, for her part, sent arms to the Communists who were fighting on the side of the Government. When Spain appealed to the League of Nations, the French and British secured the passing of a resolution for non-intervention by all other countries in the Spanish quarrel—a piece of arrant hypocrisy, since everyone knew that the rebellion had been started and was only being maintained by foreign intervention, and that Italy and Germany had no intention of changing their policy.

Lloyd George had no patience with the appeasement policy, and castigated the Government when he spoke either in the House or in the country. His speeches in the House were infrequent. His was a lone voice, and the hostile audience, guiltily aware of the justice of his condemnation, was restive and disrespectful to the elderly statesman. He got a better hearing when he went to support candidates at by-elections who had pledged themselves to the Council of Action's policy on peace and reconstruction. As a rule, these were Labour candidates, for the National Government would not allow its nominees to promise support for action of any kind to maintain the League or remedy unemployment.

Lloyd George clearly saw the menace to Britain created by Italy's development of a Fascist rule in Spain. He had maps prepared showing the extent to which Fascist powers were being established round the Mediterranean Sea, which was Britain's main route to her Empire in the east, and he used these at his meetings. Mussolini, after his triumph in Abyssinia, became uncontrollably arrogant. He sent his submarines to sink any British vessels approaching Spanish harbours, and when Eden brought about the Nyon Agreement for ending this piracy, Mussolini demanded his resignation and Neville Chamberlain meekly gave way. Eden went, and Chamberlain concluded a treaty with the Italian Dictator which conceded to him a practical control of the Mediterranean.

Eden fell on 20th February, 1938. Hitler rightly judged that Chamberlain, if he cowered before Mussolini, would show the same meekness to himself, and in March he swept into Austria and annexed it. He prepared to follow up this move by the annexation of Czecho-Slovakia in May, and to this end he arranged for the Sudeten-Germans of Bohemia to start a clamour for fuller rights of self-determination, and massed his troops among the frontier. But the Czechs carried out a lightning mobilization, and Hitler decided to draw back for the moment.

Lloyd George was on the Riviera at the time of Austria's fall, completing his Peace Memoirs. But after his return he solemnly warned the Government that they were heading straight for war. "You have retreated so often before these dictators that they have come to the conclusion that there is no point at which you will stand!" The description was deplorably exact.

Through the summer Hitler developed his pressure on Czecho-Slovakia, and in September he declared at the Nuremberg Congress that his patience was exhausted. The Czechs got ready for the expected attack. France was pledged by treaty to come to their assistance, and Russia to support France, so a general war seemed imminent, for Britain was allied with France. But Hitler rightly guessed that Chamberlain was not a fighter, and the Prime Minister flew over with his umbrella to Berchtesgaden to find some way of avoiding a conflict. The dismal story of that visit, of the second visit to Hitler at Godesberg, and the final surrender of Munich, is now familiar and lamentable history.

Lloyd George was not unnaturally furious at seeing the European peace he had been at such pains to erect at Paris being broken up in this fashion. He would never have made the Munich surrender; but equally he would never have followed the course of appeasement which encouraged the Continental dictators to risk such aggressive courses. Appeasement, he saw clearly, was not gaining peace. It was only encouraging aggression. In a broadcast to America on 11th November, 1938, he urged that the great Powers should get together to thrash out the problem of how to establish real peaceful relations. But he was in much the same condition as one in a nightmare who sees a horror approaching and cannot stir hand or foot or voice. For while Lloyd George realized that international events were hurrying the world towards the maelstrom, he knew that those in charge of the Government would never take any firm measures to check the drift, and he himself was without political power and physically no longer capable of shouldering the burden of office, even if he had been offered the task. He was an "Elder Statesman", able to give advice which was shrewd and far-sighted, but doomed to watch impotently while little men rejected his counsel and obtusely permitted the nation and Empire to be swept to disaster and shipwreck.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### GLOAMING

THE year 1939 was for Lloyd George the darkest and most exasperating in his whole career. He was compelled to be a helpless spectator while his country, in which he had a passionately patriotic pride, was allowed by feebly arrogant and purblind leaders to slide down a slope of shame into the disaster of a war more perilous to her national independence than any since the Norman Conquest. He was certain that the war could have been averted by firm and enlightened statesmanship. But that statesmanship was lacking, and when he tried to offer the advice which his experience dictated, he met only mockery and contempt. He was regarded as a senile Cassandra, prophesying calamity now that he was no longer in control of affairs. Unhappily for Britain he was, like Cassandra, a true prophet.

Facts which have since come to light have substantiated to the full the attitude he took up. It is now known that the German army chiefs were far from happy about Hitler's reckless war plans, and that if firm and timely opposition had been shown to them by the British and French, Hitler would have been thrown from power and his schemes of aggression would have been set aside. But in place of firmness there was every sign of utter weakness and irresolution. Ciano recorded in his diary on 27th January, 1939, that Neville Chamberlain actually submitted through the British Ambassador to Mussolini for the Duce's approval the outline of a speech he proposed to deliver in Parliament, and offered to make any alterations that Mussolini thought desirable! So far had he sunk in pursuit of his policy of appeasement. Small wonder if Hitler, with whom Mussolini was now in league, recognized that the British Premier could be pushed about without fear or scruple.

Addressing a General Meeting of the Council of Action on 3rd February, 1939, Lloyd George said:

"Up to the present the Governments of Britain and France have given in absolutely and unequivocally in the East, in Africa and in Europe to the claims of the aggressors. Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini are persuaded that when the time comes for a decision on the fresh demands presented to them they will not make a stand. They are not in as good a position to do so as they were a year ago. They have surrendered the bastion of the Bohemian mountains; they have alienated Russia, the greatest military Power in the world, by

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persistently snubbing her; they have disintegrated the collective security of the Covenant; and finally, they have allowed the Dictators to grasp firmly in their own hands the key position to the trade routes of France, Britain and Russia."

It was the threat to Britain's sea routes which above all alarmed Lloyd George. He remembered all too well how near Britain had come to collapse in the First World War through the German submarine attacks on her vital shipping. The Mediterranean especially had been a death-trap, though the Central Powers had only limited means of access to it. Now, with Italy and Spain as Fascist territories, with German heavy artillery mounted at the Straits of Gibraltar, with the little island of Pantellaria, midway between Italy and North Africa, turned into a fortress, it was clear that the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal would cease in the event of war to be navigable by British merchant shipping. Our supplies of food and raw materials from India, Malaya and Australasia, our oil from Persia and Irak, our communications with our troops in Egypt and Palestine would be, if not totally severed, at least dependent on the long haul round the African Continent, running the gauntlet of enemy submarines based on the Fascist Canaries or on Spain's West African colony of Rio de Oro.

But if such strategic dangers alarmed him, he was far more deeply hurt at seeing those foundations for a world peace which he had striven so hard to lay at Paris being abandoned while an invertebrate Administration chose to take its stand on a sand castle of appeasement. He still tried to urge international solidarity, and international disarmament based on it, as a policy which would assure world peace. But there was not among the Great Powers any glimmer of a hope of agreement. In 1939 it was futile to talk of disarmament. With Germany and Italy openly planning aggression, it was clear that only heavy armaments in the hands of the peace-seeking nations and an unmistakable determination to use them to resist any attempt at aggression could maintain peace.

The Chamberlain Government showed no signs of such a determination; but did go so far as to announce, and rather flabbily begin to put in hand a programme of rearmament. Lloyd George supported them when they brought in conscription, for he had always approved of national training for defence. He blamed the Government, not for their promise of rearmament, but for their poor performance. Large sums were voted, but only partially spent, for Chamberlain insisted that commercial business must come first and must not be interfered with by munition production.

Shame followed shame. On 27th February, Chamberlain announced that he had decided to recognize Franco's Government in Spain, where

the Italian troops had now completed the rout of the Popular forces and put their puppet in control. A couple of weeks later, on 14th March, German troops poured into what had been left of Czecho-Slovakia after her Munich mutilation and annexed the whole country. Recognizing at last that his policy of appeasement was bringing only defeat, Chamberlain thought he would strike a more resolute attitude, and on 31st March he announced that if Poland—the country clearly marked out as Hitler's next victim—found it vital to resist a threat to her independence, the British Government would lend all the support in their power. How much he meant by that declaration it is not easy to say. In defending his abandonment of Czecho-Slovakia he had pleaded that it was incredible that we should become involved in war "because of a quarrel in a far-away country between people of whom we know nothing!" Poland was more remote than Czecho-Slovakia, much less well known to the British, and even more inaccessible to any aid from this country. It was subsequently revealed that Chamberlain had given this pledge to Poland without consulting the military experts.

The Dictators were sure he was bluffing, and a week after Neville had made his defiant noise Mussolini showed his contempt for it by invading Albania on 7th April, and annexing the country. Chamberlain looked on nervelessly. "We would send a protest if it would do any good"! he replied to questioners. He had not even the spirit to denounce the Anglo-Italian Agreement which he had concluded a year earlier with Mussolini.

Lloyd George had been urging for some time that if we were to hold Hitler in check it was vital to reach an understanding with Russia. The pledge to Poland could mean little if it were not based on such an understanding. He urged this point in Parliament on 3rd April, saying:

"If we are going in without the help of Russia we are walking into a trap. It is the only country whose armies can get there. She is the only country whose air fleet can match the German—some say it is better. . . ."

Despite his admiration for Hitler's feats of domestic reconstruction in Germany, Lloyd George was always utterly opposed to the Nazi system and to Hitler's policy of aggression, and had a high opinion of Russia's military strength. When Lindbergh came to see him after visiting Germany and Russia, and tried to belittle Russia's value as a potential ally, L.G. gave him short shrift. "Whom did you see in Russia?" he asked Lindbergh. "Stalin?" "No." "Timoshenko?" "No." "Voroshiloff?" "No." Lloyd George dismissed his evidence with contempt.

Speaking at Pwllheli on 12th April, Lloyd George challenged the

Prime Minister to show whether he really meant business. The first test, he declared, was whether he would come to a definite military understanding with Russia for joint action with her and France at the first new aggressive act of either of the Dictators. Unless Russia came in it was idle to invite Roumania and Greece and Yugoslavia to risk their lives on any promise made by the two Powers that had so disgracefully abandoned Austria, Czecho-Slovakia and Albania. But Russia would not join a mere skedaddling alliance. If a real alliance were made, neither of the Dictators would move.

Russia appeared at the time to have dropped, at least temporarily, her policy of world revolution which Trotsky had so persistently advocated. Stalin had driven Trotsky into exile and purged his supporters, and was concentrating on a policy of Russian nationalism. So there were not the same ideological objections to alliance with Russia as had formerly existed. Lloyd George returned to the attack on 8th May, in the debate on conscription. Chamberlain had by now extended guarantees not only to Poland but to Roumania, which was also threatened by Hitler, and to Greece, menaced by Mussolini. L.G. said:

“Without Russia these three guarantees to Poland, to Roumania and to Greece are the most reckless commitments that any country has ever entered. I will say more. They are demented pledges that cannot be redeemed with this enormous deficiency, this great gap between the forces arrayed on the other side and the forces which at the present moment we could put in.”

He repeated this plea when he opened the debate on the Foreign Office vote on 19th May. Churchill was no less urgent in proffering the same advice to the Government. Eden and Attlee also supported Lloyd George's plea.

By this time Chamberlain had got to the length of inviting Russia to join in guaranteeing the defence of Poland and Roumania; but had been met by her demand that the mutual guarantees should also cover the Baltic States. This was reasonable, for Hitler might well have chosen to strike there from East Prussia, in order to bring his troops up to the Russian frontier without involving himself in a war with the Western Powers. In June a Foreign Office official, Mr. Strang, was sent to Moscow to carry on negotiations. While he was of first-class ability, the job was properly one for the Foreign Secretary, and the Russians were not favourably impressed by the selection of an official in place of a Minister as the special envoy of Britain.

The Soviet Government had no illusions. It knew quite well that Hitler had designs on Russian territory, and that the Western Powers

would be well content to see him expend his energies in that direction, if he would leave them and their allies alone. The question for Russia was whether she would better preserve herself against a German aggression by an alliance with the unfriendly Western Powers, or by an alliance with Hitler himself that would leave him free to fling his forces against France. Russia carried on negotiations simultaneously with both sides. When Stalin grew weary of the vagueness of Britain's approaches, and her unwillingness to commit herself to any explicit undertakings or military agreements, he decided that the safer policy for him was a pact with Germany. It was signed on 23rd August, 1939, and Hitler had his hands free for a new campaign of aggression. He at once began to mass his troops along the Polish frontier. On 1st September they swept over it and the Second World War had begun.

It was too late for Chamberlain to back out of his pledge to Poland, though eyewitnesses said that he seemed far from pleased at the warmth with which from all parts of the House of Commons assurances were given to him of full support in resistance to Germany's latest aggression. He sent Hitler an ultimatum which had no effect. When on 2nd September he appeared to be still angling for Mussolini's help in reopening negotiations, the House began to grow restive. Finally, at 11 a.m. on Sunday, 3rd September, war was declared by Britain. Supporting the decision, Lloyd George declared:

"The Government could do no other than what they have done. I am one out of tens of millions in this country who will back any Government that is in power in fighting this struggle through, in however humble a capacity we may be called upon to render service to our country."

The spirit, beyond question, was willing enough. But there were obstacles in the way of service to the country by the former War Premier. Chamberlain was as bitter as ever in his resolve not to have Lloyd George in the same Cabinet with himself. Lloyd George had the utmost contempt for Chamberlain as a war leader, and felt sure that in his hands Britain's war effort would be ineffectual. He was completely out of sympathy with the disastrous statesmanship which had led Europe into the abyss. Perhaps in reality most decisive of all—though Lloyd George could not bear to admit it to others, and tried to shut his eyes to it—he had become physically quite unequal to facing the strain of continuous duty in office. He could still make a brilliant showing now and again on a public platform or in his less and less frequent appearances in the House of Commons. But after each such effort he was a tired man, and for some days afterwards took things easy. Though he was himself unaware

of it, and his medical adviser did not yet suspect it, he must already have begun to suffer from the insidious growth which would eventually prove fatal; and as a result his vitality was impaired, and he was becoming disinclined for exertion.

Those near him could not fail to mark his growing tendency to refuse engagements, or to back out from them if he had been persuaded to give his consent to take them. All through his long life he had never been idle. He had been an inexhaustible fountain of energy. He was no playboy. In youth he had never had time for play, and had not learned the art, and to the discomfort of those associated with him, he always looked on holidays as opportunities to get some special work done. But now his work had become intermittent, with longer and longer intervals between each major effort.

The old initiative was still there, but it was now mainly concentrated on those countryside interests which were ineradicable in the man whom Masterman had called "an inspired peasant". He had bought up an estate adjoining his own at Churt, and launched out into a big new development of his farming activities. In the summer of 1939 he had also purchased a farm, Ty Newydd, at Llanystumdwy, in whose fields he had roamed and poached when he was a small boy, and there he set to work to establish fruit culture, in the hope that his experiment might prove of value to his Welsh neighbours, and show them how to make a profit out of orchard fruit such as he was now reaping at Churt. In these agricultural ventures he had found some solace and distraction from the heart-sickening spectacle of the new democratic Europe he had built at Paris falling into the claws of ruthless dictators.

With the actual outbreak of war, Lloyd George's sombre forebodings were fulfilled. He had anticipated it; he had warned the country that we should be quite unable, without Russia's aid, to render any help to Poland in fulfilment of our promise; and he had constantly expressed to his intimates the conviction that Chamberlain was incapable of directing effectively a national war effort. So it fell out. No military or air force help could be got through to Poland, where Hitler carried out a dramatic application of his "Blitzkrieg" strategy. In a fortnight the Germans had broken up the Polish armies and advanced past Warsaw into Eastern Poland. Meanwhile the British Government sent troops over to France, where they sat in trenches and vainly waited for the Germans to attack them.

Chamberlain overcame his personal jealousies to the extent of bringing into his cabinet Winston Churchill, who took over his old post as First Lord of the Admiralty. Eden, too, was readmitted to office as Dominions Secretary. The Liberal and Labour leaders declined to associate themselves with Chamberlain's administration, which by its criminal bungling had

landed Britain and Europe in disaster, and seemed little likely to find a way out. Lloyd George, the experienced war leader, was not approached.

During the opening months of the war the only offensive action taken by British forces was at sea, where under Churchill the Navy set briskly to work to round up German merchant vessels and to hunt down their submarines and commerce raiders. The convoy system, which Lloyd George had forced upon a reluctant Admiralty in 1917, was this time adopted forthwith as a protection for our mercantile marine. But on land and in the air, no aggression was sanctioned. Chamberlain looked on impassively while Poland was crushed. When the German armies reached Lwow in Polish Ukraine and Brest-Litovsk in North-East Poland, Stalin took a hand and invaded the stricken country from the east, declaring that his pact with it was annulled through the breakdown of its Government. His forces advanced over the eastern part of the country, pushing back the German troops to approximately the old Curzon line that had been proposed at the Peace Conference of Paris as Poland's eastern frontier. Polish Ukraine and Byelo-Russia, he insisted, were his share of the loot. On 29th September a Russo-German treaty was signed over the Polish corpse.

Hitler had been careful to launch no attack as yet in the west. Knowing the calibre of the British and French Premiers, he was hopeful that he could persuade them to call off the war now that Poland, on whose behalf they had taken up arms, had been liquidated. On 6th October he made a speech in the Reichstag urging the Western Powers to make peace, and spare the millions of lives that would be sacrificed if they persisted in maintaining hostilities to no purpose. "I make this declaration only because I very naturally desire to spare my people suffering. But should the views of Churchill and his following prevail, then this declaration will be my last."

The views of Churchill and his following were by now those of the British nation as a whole. After having too long acquiesced in Chamberlain's policy of appeasement—at first with indifference, then with growing unease and a sullen sense of shame—it was now resolved to join issue with Hitler once and for all, and to compel him to undo his wrongs to Czecho-Slovakia and Poland, and abandon his projects of world conquest. This attitude was firmly expressed by Chamberlain himself in the Commons on 12th October, in answer to Hitler's declaration.

It must be admitted that Lloyd George's attitude to the issue at this stage bewildered and pained many of his friends, and seemed very much out of keeping with his known character. On 3rd October, three days before Hitler's "Declaration", L.G. spoke in the Commons, urging the Government not to be in a hurry to thrust aside any offer which might come from Hitler to enter into peace negotiations if it were transmitted

through a third government—either Russia or Italy. While he rejected the suggestion that we should agree to a surrender, he urged that there were many points to be settled, and that in face of our proved readiness to fight if a reasonable settlement could not be reached terms might be arranged for a permanent peace settlement, to which the neutral countries, including the United States, would be partners.

On 12th and 13th October, Lloyd George arranged a special conference of the Council of Action at Caxton Hall, at which he expanded this suggestion. He insisted that if in reply to Hitler's Declaration we invited him to say what terms of peace he had in mind, we should, if those terms were evidently intolerable, be justified in the eyes of the world in rejecting his peace offer and going on with the war. If without such inquiry we flatly refused to consider any alternative to a fight to the finish with him, we might seem in the eyes of the neutral world to be the real warmongers.

Such a proposal had, of course, some plausibility as a lawyer's strategy, designed to put the opposite party in a difficulty and damage his case in the eyes of the court. And in justice to him it must be added that his attitude was shared by a number of people in the Labour Party and by opinion in Canada and the United States. But it was out of harmony with the prevailing temper of the nation and the realities of the issue. By now, most people were well aware that Hitler's word was utterly worthless; that he would keep any pact only until he was ready to break it; that he and his Nazi colleagues were plotting the overthrow, by fraud and force, of all neighbour states; and that any lull secured by some temporary pact would be used by him to establish himself more firmly in whatever new gains had been left to him, and prepare more amply for another aggression. Any suggestion by the Allies that they were ready to treat with Hitler would only damp the resolution of their own people and heighten the confidence of the Nazis; and it sounded strangely from the man who had been the incarnation of the people's warrior spirit in the First World War, and the author of the doctrine of the "Knock-out Blow".

Yet it is not difficult to trace out the reasons which led this doughty old fighter to adopt so dubious an attitude. The immediate situation held no promise that Britain and France would actually wage more than a token war with Germany. On the Western Front the "Phoney War" was being carried on. The French troops in the Maginot Line and the British manning its northern extension—not yet actually constructed—were sitting still, attempting no offensive operations. Their air forces were as quiescent. Nothing was being done or projected which bore the mark of resolute warlike purpose. The Government's rearmament programme, which had fallen far behind schedule up to the declaration of hostilities, was belatedly getting into real working order, but the

Chamberlain administration was clearly as incompetent to conduct a war as it had shown itself to avert one. Perhaps it had better get out of the mess on the best terms it could, if these did not prove intolerable, and by the time the trouble came to a fresh head there might be abler men in charge of affairs here, who could deal with it efficiently. The fact that his own advice was not being sought, despite his brilliant record as a victorious War Premier, showed that the Administration was persisting in clinging to petty personal antagonisms in the face of the desperate crisis, and confirmed his conviction that triumph was impossible with such men in charge.

It must also be admitted that he felt some misgivings about the treatment of Germany at and after the peace settlement of Versailles. He had been uneasy about the inclusion of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia, and though he had given way to the pressure of his colleagues and of Benes about it, he thought the Sudetens should have been allowed all along a fuller measure of autonomy. He had been unhappy about the terms of the final settlement of the Upper Silesian question and the Polish Corridor and Danzig.

Then, after Lloyd George fell from office in 1922, there had occurred the French invasion of the Ruhr in 1923; the failure of the League to insist on the observance of the treaty provisions for the protection of minorities; abdication of the League's functions in face of the Japanese invasion of Manchuria; the breakdown of the Disarmament Conference; the humiliating collapse of its efforts to check Italian aggression in Abyssinia and contemptible prevarication over the Fascist intervention in Spain. The peace settlement Lloyd George had constructed at Paris had been shattered through the dishonourable feebleness of British statesmen and the unscrupulous power politics of the French, and Germany had lost alike the protection and the restraint which the League system had been designed to furnish. One can understand, therefore, and forgive, the savage disappointment of the elderly statesman who felt that his great work for the maintenance of world peace had been destroyed by the criminal folly of his successors, and who saw only desolation and a threat to civilization as the result of another world war.

That feeling, however, was not widely shared by his friends and supporters. Sickened of the policy of appeasement, they were quite clear that, now the decision had been taken to make a stand against Hitler, it must be seen through to the end. When Lloyd George went up to his constituents to address them in the great Pavilion at Carnarvon, he found the same uncompromising temper, and though he made some references to his idea of trying to hold a conference to end the war, he chiefly stressed the importance of winning Russia to our side. He had for a long time been on very friendly terms with Maisky, the Russian

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Ambassador, and Maisky's influence no doubt played a considerable part in strengthening his advocacy of a conference in which Russia would be included.

After his experience in North Wales, Lloyd George gave up the idea of urging that peace terms should be explored. He turned, instead, to make his practical contribution to the needs of the country by pressing for steps to be taken to make fuller use of the food production capacity of the British countryside. Here he was on ground that he had long made his own. In the First World War he had set on foot the Food Production Campaign by which the domestic output of foodstuffs had been greatly expanded. During the intervening years he had put agricultural revival in the forefront of his schemes for dealing with unemployment, and had made it the largest single feature in his "New Deal" proposals. On 6th February, 1940, he made one of his infrequent appearances in the Commons to urge the nation to reclaim its derelict acres and grow food to save itself from starvation in face of the formidable attacks on its shipping which Hitler was now making by submarine and mine.

On 12th April, 1940, Lloyd George reached his jubilee of fifty years' unbroken service in the House of Commons, and tributes poured in upon him from every quarter. There was a great gathering in Caernarvon on 20th April, at which he was presented with an album containing the signatures of over 15,000 well-wishers from all political parties, in commemoration of this remarkable record, and his speech to the meeting was broadcast. He passed in review the notable political developments of the past fifty years, and declared in regard to the crisis with which the country was now faced:

"If there is any service, be it great or small, which I can give to help the nation out of its tribulation and to lead the world again into the paths of peace, justice and freedom, I will do so."

Through the winter and early spring the "phoney war" went on. Though the Germans were busy constructing their Siegfried Line in the west, working even at night by the aid of arc lights, Chamberlain would permit no attack on them, and the British 'planes which swept over Germany by night dropped only pamphlets, not bombs, directed by the fatuous theory that the German people, in the tide of unresisted victory, could be driven to rebel against their Fuehrer by paper sermons. Chamberlain at last went so far as to brag that Hitler had "missed the boat!" He imagined that the German immobility in the West was due, like his own, to lack of purpose or preparation.

He was swiftly undeceived. On 9th April, hard on the heels of his boast, came the German invasion of Denmark and Norway. British

efforts to aid the Norwegian resistance were too little and too late; the one effective stroke they could have carried out—the making of a prompt assault on Trondheim—being overruled by the Cabinet. At the beginning of May the remnants of the British expeditionary forces sent to southern Norway were withdrawn, and when Chamberlain met Parliament on 7th May, the fury against his misrule burst out in a storm. Some of the bitterest speeches came from the Government's own side of the House; the most ruthless of these being Amery's quotation from Cromwell:

“You have sat too long here for any good you have been doing. Depart, I say, and let us have done with you. In the name of God, go!”

Chamberlain replied, calling on his friends to support him in the lobby. This opened the way for Lloyd George to deliver a deadly *coup de grâce*. After dealing plainly with the seriousness of the situation in which the nation was now placed, he said:

“It is not a question of who are the Prime Minister's friends. It is a far bigger issue. The Prime Minister must remember that he has met this formidable foe of ours in peace and in war. He has always been worsted. He is not in a position to put it on the ground of friendship. He has appealed for sacrifice. The nation is prepared for every sacrifice so long as it has leadership. . . . I say solemnly that the Prime Minister should give an example of sacrifice, because there is nothing which can contribute more to victory than that he should sacrifice the seals of office.”

On the division, the Government's immense majority sank to 81, and 39 of the Government's supporters went into the lobby against it. On 9th May, Chamberlain tried to reconstruct his Government on a broader basis, but the Liberal and Labour leaders refused to join any Administration under his leadership, so next day he resigned, and Winston Churchill became Prime Minister.

Taking warning by the schism that had rent the Liberal Party in 1916 when Lloyd George replaced Asquith, Churchill worked hard to hold the Tories together, and persuaded Chamberlain to remain a member of his War Cabinet, which he cut down to five members on the L.G. model, bringing in Attlee and Arthur Greenwood from the Labour Party to join himself, Lord Halifax and Chamberlain. The Liberal and Labour Parties united with the National Government in a Coalition, and four Labour and three Liberal members took departmental Ministries. One Labour leader, Ernest Bevin, was not yet actually a member, but a seat

was found for him in Central Wandsworth, the sitting member, Colonel Nathan, going to the House of Lords.

Churchill very much wanted to bring his old friend Lloyd George into his Administration, and both he and Lord Beaverbrook brought great pressure to bear to persuade him to join the Cabinet in some capacity which would not put too great a strain upon his physique. The country would have been glad to see the veteran War Premier join the Government, for the old magic still clung round his name, and men remembered how he had brought his organizing genius, his dauntless courage and his unquenchable energy to the task of winning the First World War. It was clear to both L.G. and Churchill that he was no longer equal to the demands of a regular departmental office, but in view of his special interest in agricultural development the idea was mooted of his taking a supervisory charge of the national effort for food production.

Chamberlain still detested the idea of Lloyd George's admission to a Cabinet of which he was a member, and Lloyd George was no more eager to have Chamberlain as his colleague. But at length, on 6th June, Churchill sent a letter to Chamberlain urging him in the best interests of the country to consent to Lloyd George joining the Cabinet. Churchill promised that the offer would be conditional on Lloyd George keeping the peace with Chamberlain, and that if Chamberlain found the arrangement not satisfactory, he could ask Churchill to dispense with L.G.'s services. Very reluctantly Chamberlain accepted those terms, and a definite offer was made to the ex-Premier.

Lord Beaverbrook, who was helping Churchill in his Cabinet making, was convinced at this point that L.G. was about to accept, but to his chagrin, and no doubt that of Churchill himself, L.G., after giving them cause to expect his co-operation, suddenly reverted to his attitude of obstinate refusal.

It is perhaps hardly surprising that, after careful consideration, Lloyd George decided against accepting. It would have been an intolerable situation for him to hold office by grace of Neville Chamberlain, whom he despised, and to be under threat of dismissal if he and Chamberlain fell out. He felt, too, that he and Churchill were bound to differ from time to time about the way in which the war should be conducted, and he did not want to get involved in quarrels with his old ally. Probably a yet more decisive factor was his realization that he was no longer physically resilient enough to carry out regular official duties. He was only capable of intermittent effort. The chance to hold office once more in the service of his country had come at last; but it had come too late for Lloyd George. So he decided very wisely, though reluctantly, to decline the seat in the Cabinet which Churchill had offered him.

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

On 11th July he again appeared in the House of Commons to urge the necessity of cultivating every acre of available agricultural land in the country. A varied diet with vegetables and barley, he claimed, such as peasants had for long ages been accustomed to live on, would improve national health. He himself had been reared on such simple fare.

Shortly after this Lloyd George went up to Criccieth, and spent the rest of the summer and the autumn in North Wales. Though he had decided against joining the Administration, he was in full agreement with its policy of defying Hitler and carrying on the fight in the teeth of every odd. When he received a letter from Chiozza Money, criticizing the attitude of the Government and expressing sympathy with the Nazi-Fascist case, he replied, on 25th September:

"Your letter seems to me to take much too one-sided a view of the merits of the dispute between the Authoritarian States and the democratic countries. You are ignoring altogether the wanton acts of aggression which the former committed in Abyssinia, in Albania, in Czecho-Slovakia, in Poland, Holland and Belgium. You also overlook their complete suppression of freedom of speech, and freedom of expression and criticism which are essential to the existence of a free country.

"As you are aware, I have been an unsparing critic of the policy of the British Government when I have found it lacking in foresight and wisdom, but that does not prevent me seeing the peril to liberty which is involved in Fascist and Nazi aggression."

On 12th December, 1940, Lord Lothian, the British Ambassador in the U.S.A., died at Washington. He was Lloyd George's close friend, and as Philip Kerr, before his accession to the Marquisate, had acted between 1916-21 as one of Lloyd George's secretaries. Three days later, in response to a message from Churchill, L.G. came down to town from Criccieth, and engaged in discussions with the Prime Minister, who suggested sending him to America as Lothian's successor at the Embassy. It was a tempting offer; but Lloyd George knew himself to be physically unfit for such an exacting task, and Lord Dawson, after examining him, was firmly of the same opinion. Lord Halifax was appointed on 22nd December to the vacant Embassy.

Lloyd George stayed on in the south for a time. He had caused a deep shelter to be constructed beside his house at Churt, where he could sleep peacefully while German 'planes droned across the Surrey sky, seeking their targets. On 19th December he spoke once more in the House, congratulating the British Army in North Africa on their recent victories over the Italians. But he was called back abruptly and tragically

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to Criccieth. On 15th January, 1941, news reached him that his wife, Dame Margaret, was not well, and on the 18th he heard in the evening that she was worse. He telephoned to Lord Dawson in London and arranged for him to travel to Criccieth the next day, and L.G. himself set off next morning by car from Churt.

It was bitter winter weather and snow blizzards were raging over the country. Lord Dawson could not get through from Bangor to Criccieth. Lloyd George himself plunged from one snowdrift into another, and was brought to a complete halt in the heart of the North Welsh mountains, at Cerrig-y-Druidion, between Corwen and Bettws-y-Coed, where just at dusk he ran into an impenetrable drift. Next morning loyal Welshmen rallied to the scene, to help their great compatriot to win through to his dying wife. During that day and the next they cleared the road with spade and snow plough, cutting a way for his car through miles of snowdrifts, while the blizzard still swept on, almost undoing their labour. But it was too late. Not until the third day of his journey, 21st January, could Lloyd George reach Criccieth. Dame Margaret had passed away on the previous morning.

She had been Lloyd George's helpmate and comrade for fifty-three years, all but four days. They celebrated their golden wedding in January 1938 on the Riviera, where he was busy compiling his Peace Memoirs. During that long partnership Dame Margaret had loyally stood by him in their joys and sorrows, bearing everything with a stout courage and a cheerful humour. Her placid common sense was a good foil for her excitable and quick-tempered husband. She had little fondness for publicity, except among her own people in Caernarvonshire, where she was a magistrate—the first woman in Wales to hold that office—a Councillor for the Criccieth Urban District, and President of the local Women's Liberal Association. She was also a member of the Gorsedd, the ruling body of the Welsh Eisteddfod.

Lloyd George felt his loss very keenly. But after a time he pulled himself together with a flash of the old energy and came south again, resuming his pressure on the Government to make the fullest use of the country's land. He intervened in a debate on 3rd April to plead for the reclamation of the 7,000,000 derelict acres which Professor Stapledon had estimated were to be found in Britain; and as time passed he had the satisfaction of seeing many of the measures he had so long urged on the country being adopted under the discipline of war necessity. Surveys were carried out. Idle marginal land was put under the plough. The wages of farm workers were raised step by step, and the profits of farmers increased. Nor was it only in agriculture that the reforms for which he had campaigned were now being accepted. When a Ministry of Reconstruction was set up in 1943 under Lord Woolton, to lay plans for domestic

DAVID LLOYD GEORGE

conditions after the war, it based its plans for the maintenance of full employment on just that thesis of the use of national capital to promote schemes of national development in periods of depression which had been the cornerstone of the "New Deal" policy.

The Criccieth home, Brynawelon, had been given by Lloyd George to Dame Margaret, and it passed on her death to her daughter Megan. But already in the summer of 1940 Lloyd George had started to put into order his new property of Ty Newydd at Llanystumdwy, carrying out repairs and some additions to the structure of the sturdy old stone house, which had in the centuries of its existence been by turns a farmhouse, a gentleman's residence and a parsonage. It lay up the hill a little way behind the village, commanding a marvellous view of the whole sweep of Cardigan Bay and of the clustering blue heights of the Welsh mountain ranges. Here Lloyd George had available for him a residence where he would be surrounded by the scenes and memories of his ardent boyhood. But for a long time after Dame Margaret's death he remained at Churt, recoiling from the sorrowful associations of North Wales.

He withdrew more and more from the political field. His disinclination to accept engagements increased with his age. He was becoming a lonely figure, for he had outlived nearly all his contemporaries, and the passing-bell of obituary notices for men who had been his friends sounded in the papers with distressing frequency. After the best part of three years of widowhood his friends were very glad when he married Miss Frances Stevenson, his personal secretary, who had worked with him since 1913 and given him constant and devoted service. The wedding took place on 23rd October, 1943, very quietly, at the Guildford Registry Office.

Lloyd George followed the course of the war with that keen interest which wars had always roused in him. He was often disposed to criticize the way in which it was conducted. He strongly disapproved of the Casablanca decision to insist on unconditional surrender, holding that this would necessarily prolong the war and in the end would leave the Allies with no one standing on the other side with whom they could make peace. He felt, too, after the tide had turned and the Allies were beginning to advance toward victory, that Churchill was being needlessly slow in taking his successive steps to invade the Continent. But he would not make any public criticism of his friend. He was by now reduced to the role of an armchair critic.

In 1944 his health began to show visible signs of failure. By the beginning of the year his medical adviser had diagnosed the existence of the cancer which had no doubt been secretly developing in his system for some time past; and though as usual in such cases the real nature of his trouble was not told to him, Lloyd George began to turn back in his



[Photograph by "Planet N

With his second wife



[Photograph by E. C. Pound, Caernarvon

The grave beside the Dwyfor, Llanystumdwy

## GLOAMING

mind to his old village, where he had long purposed to be laid to rest. In September 1944 he left Churt for the last time and journeyed with his wife to Llanystumdwy, where he settled down in Ty Newydd.

He had become a frail old man, and though he did not suffer pain, he quickly tired. He still took a lively interest in his fruit farm and in the improvement of his Welsh home. His favourite walk was along the edge of the river Dwyfor, in which as a boy he had fished for trout and salmon. He would stand on a great stone among the trees at a spot where there was a picturesque view up the stream, where it came cascading down over the boulders from the far-off Welsh mountains, and would tell his wife that this was the spot where he wished to be laid to rest, and this the stone to mark his grave.

He realized that he would never be able to resume his old activities in the House of Commons, nor indeed to fight the General Election which would inevitably ensue on the conclusion of the war; but as the signs multiplied that victory was drawing near he felt that he would like to be able to proffer his counsel in the peace negotiations that would follow the close of hostilities. So when it was made known to him that the King wished to raise him to the peerage he decided to accept His Majesty's offer, thinking that, as a member of that House of Lords which he had once so vigorously attacked, he might still be able to join in discussions about the peace settlement. In the New Year Honours List at the beginning of 1945 he was granted an Earldom, and took the title of Earl Lloyd-George of Dwyfor, and Viscount Gwynedd. But to his grateful fellow-countrymen he will always remain Lloyd George, the great Commoner.

He lived to know that Britain was nearing victory in the Second World War, but not to be a witness of the ultimate triumph. In February 1945 his health began to fail rapidly, and he became confined to the house, and soon to his couch. He suffered no pain, but toward the end he grew very feeble, and his wife became his nurse. Yet there was much to brighten his closing days. He was among his own people, who accorded him the loving reverence which it was natural for them to feel for one of themselves, who had risen to be the greatest world figure ever reared among the Welsh hills. He was the great Lloyd George, and he was a village lad of Llanystumdwy, who had been the playmate of their fathers or grandfathers. The farmers round would send in presents of eggs and poultry, the fishermen sent him fish, and the cottagers would bring posies from their cottage gardens. An unceasing pilgrimage wandered up between the fern-covered stone walls of the country lane that led from the village to Ty Newydd, bringing their offerings and their affectionate inquiries after the health of their chief. He rested at first in his chair, and later on his bed, before the great bay

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window which had been built for him at the end of his library on the first floor of the house, where he could gaze out on the mountains of Merioneth and Cardigan, on the far prospect of Harlech Castle, and the opalescent sea that stretched between.

Here, in the gloaming of a springtime evening on 26th March, 1945, he passed quietly away, with his wife and his daughter Megan—the two people whom he loved most dearly—holding his hands.

His many tasks were ended. "I am immortal till my work is done!" He had once quoted to the writer that saying of General Gordon, and applied it to himself. It had been a very strenuous course, thickly packed with achievement. "His countrymen," wrote *The Times*, "will remember that he wrought greatly and daringly for them in dark times, in peace and in war, and will admit without distinction of class or party that a great man has passed away." And Churchill, paying tribute to him in the House of Commons, said: •

"As a man of action, resource and creative energy he stood, when at his zenith, without a rival. His name is a household word throughout our Commonwealth of Nations. He was the greatest Welshman which that unconquerable race has produced since the age of the Tudors. Much of his work abides, some of it will grow greatly in the future, and those who come after us will find the pillars of his life's toil upstanding, massive and indestructible."

His worn-out body was laid to rest, as he had wished, in the spot he had chosen, among the trees on the bank of the rushing Dwyfor, beneath the stone where he had loved to stand and gaze up the river with which, as a boy, he had played. The ground was specially consecrated, but it needed no rite to make it a hallowed spot for all Welshmen. The funeral was in the simple tradition of the Welsh countryside, and his coffin, smothered with floral tributes, was borne to the grave on a farm waggon, in the presence of a gathering of many thousands; for his Welsh people, who loved and honoured him, came from every corner of the Kingdom to pay that last respect. Never before had the woods along the Dwyfor heard such a chorus as re-echoed when that vast concourse joined in singing the old Welsh hymns that Lloyd George himself had so often sung.

His tomb has now become a national shrine, to which people from all over the world make pilgrimage. But his finest monument is in the kindlier conditions of life which he won for the poor and the humble for whom he spent his powers.

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